

F A N N Y;

OR,

THE DESERTED DAUGHTER.

FANNY;

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A NOVEL.

BEING THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ANNALS

THE DEERED DISTRICT

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FANNY;

THE DESERTED DAUGHTER.

CHAP. V.

FANNY shed tears of joy over this kind, this friendly letter, and, impatient to communicate her happiness to Mr. Wigstead, she ran down to his parlour, and tapped at the door; it was immediately opened by Edmund, who was the only person in the room. "I came to speak to Mr. Wigstead," said she.

"He is out on business," said Edmund; "but let not his absence fright-

en you hence; here is one too happy in your company to suffer you to go so soon."

"I could not have staid a moment," said she, "I have already left Miss Sophy a long time."

"Oh," cried Edmund passionately, "throw not away your time on Sophy, when it can be so much better employed in listening to me."

Edmund was wholly undisguised; his large black eyes were full of the most decided impertinence,—and, holding both her hands tight, he was earnestly gazing in her face, while she struggled to get away, when Miss Wigstead burst into the room.

"Edmund," said she, "I wanted you. Good God! good people, I beg
your

your pardon ! Miss Vincent don't look so confused, I meant not to disturb you." And away she flew, regardless of Fanny's call, while Edmund enjoyed her confusion with a malicious joy.

Still he kept possession of both her hands, staring fixedly in her blushing face, and saying a hundred gallant things, which he thought irresistible.— In vain she struggled, in vain she entreated him to release her, he seemed obstinately bent on detaining her, till Mr. Wigstead's rap restored her freedom.

Edmund immediately made off, trusting to Fanny's delicacy not to complain to his father, and Fanny was now too much agitated to stay and speak to Mr. Wigstead; she therefore retired, but not so quickly but that he saw her, and calling her kindly to him, said, " I am quite alone."

The benevolent tone of his voice recalled her spirits, and she turned about. She read to him part of Lady Susan's letter, and received with delight his kind congratulations.

She delayed not long answering her friend's kind epistle, and made her a full and free communication of all that had happened to her, leaving it to her discretion what to reveal, or what to hide from Lord de Grey.

Though the certainty of Lady Susan's friendship was the ostensive reason for Fanny's good spirits that day, who shall venture to say that Lord de Grey's earnestness was not also very pleasing to her heart. Edmund Wigstead's impertinence, Miss Wigstead's evident malice, Sophy's perverseness, Mrs. Wigstead's coarseness, were all forgotten, and her
mind

mind was so light, so harmonized, that she scarce remembered she was unfortunate.

Mr. Wigstead saw with pleasure the gaiety of her heart; Matthew was all extacy; he shared in the good spirits of his tutoress, as he called her, and all was pleasantness and harmony.

Some weeks passed on, unmarked by any great event; Mr. Monteith occasionally called, but found it difficult to remove Fanny's renewed prejudice against him; he reminded her of her promise to call on Mrs. Greville, who received her with infinite kindness, and would not be easy without her fixing a day to dine with her. She passed two or three days at different times with this lady, who was so uniformly attentive and obliging, that Fanny felt infinitely more

at ease with her than with Mrs. Wigstead."

Sophia's perverse temper frustrated all Fanny's endeavours to bring her into order; the girl mocked at discipline, and ridiculed the accomplishments of her governess; and indeed Mr. Wigstead's kindness alone induced her to continue her attendance on his young daughter.

The return of the family from Bath remained very uncertain. Lord Calshot was still weak, though his reason was perfectly returned, and Lady Calshot was attacked with the gout; these circumstances were very unpleasing to Fanny, who felt her situation become every day less pleasing; for Mr. Wigstead's benevolence was not alone sufficient to support her against the other
branches

branches of his family; she gladly therefore accepted Mrs. Greville's frequent invitations, and occasionally went in public with that lady, accompanied by several gentlemen of distinction, and ladies of distinguished carriage.

On the morning of one day that she was engaged to pass with Mrs. Greville, and to go with her to the Pantheon at night, as she was sitting in the room appropriated to Sophia's lessons, waiting the entrance of her perverse pupil, Edmund suddenly came into the room.

His private boldness, contrasted with his public reserve, disgusted and terrified Fanny, who, since Sir John's horrible attempt, fancied herself the mark for every lawless invader; she always therefore endeavoured to avoid any tête-à-tête with Edmund, but he, seeing her

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about

about to rise, hastily bolted the door, and asked her "why she feared him."

"I do not fear you, Sir," said Fanny, unwilling to add to his self-importance, "but I am not at leisure."

"Oh," said he, "my mother sent me to tell you that Sophy cannot attend you this morning, as she is going to take her to pay some visits."

"Well, Sir, and where was the necessity of fastening the door to deliver this message?"

"You seemed disinclined to hear me," replied he.

"A message from Mrs. Wigstead is at least sure of my attention; however, Sir, I must beg to be allowed to go, as I have
also

also engagements which make this confinement inconvenient."

"Upon my soul," cried he, "you go not so soon; there is nothing I love so well as a little chat with you."

He had placed himself between her and the door, so that if she attempted to go, he was ready to prevent her; and, satisfied with his management, began talking on a thousand trifling subjects.

Fanny, out of all patience, walked to the other end of the room, hoping to slip by him on the other side; but he perceived her design, and hastily turning round, caught her hand, and throwing himself on his knees, pressed it to his lips.

At that moment Sophia came running to the door, followed by her mama; Sophy

phy concluded it only stuck, and pushed hard to open it, with such a bounce, that she drove back the bolt, and discovered to Mrs. Wigstead her favourite son, on his knees, kissing the hand of her daughter's governess.

Rage lightened in the fierce eyes of Mrs. Wigstead, and choaked her utterance. Miss Wigstead was close behind her mother; "Aha!" said she, "a second part of the same tune."

"Why, Nanny," said Mrs. Wigstead, "have you seen this before?"

"Oh yes, mama," replied the kind Miss Wigstead.

Mrs. Wigstead now burst into the most violent exclamations of passion; Edmund slunk away from the victim of his impertinence; Nanny and Sophia joined

joined the cry, and Fanny, overcome by the whole scene, fainted away.

The outcry brought Mr. Wigstead to the room, who, seeing his favourite senseless on the floor, eagerly enquired the cause of the disturbance.

“ Oh,” said Mrs. Wigstead, “ she is a very Jezebel, and I will not suffer her to sleep another night under my roof.”

For a long time Mr. Wigstead could gain no other reply but incoherent reproaches on his young favourite, and on himself, for so lightly adopting such an unwarrantable partiality; at length the whole story burst out, and the insolence of pretending to Edmund was bitterly inveighed against.

The poor object of contention having been lifted by Matthew, who entered in

the midst of the bustle, on the sofa; where the moment her senses returned they were scared away again by the opprobrious virulence of Mrs. Wigstead.

She forgot her purposed visit, forgot that the coach was at the door, till her gentle daughter reminded her of it; adding, "that she could give Madam her discharge when she returned." Away she went, though she beheld with anger the benevolent attentions of Mr. Wigstead, and his son Matthew, tenderly devoted to the fainting object of her fury.

Fanny now began to recover her senses, soothed by the gentle kindness of her paternal protector; he assured her of his unwavering friendship, and expressed his regret that this accident must certainly render his house an unpleasant abode to her in future; for he well knew his
utmost

utmost kindness could not compensate for the furious ill-will of his wife.

While Fanny received with affectionate gratitude the kind assurances of Mr. Wigstead, and was revolving in her mind what situation she should seek, and how she could best effect a speedy removal from Laurence Pountney-lane, her cogitations were interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Greville, who had promised to fetch her at an early hour.

Fanny earnestly wished to have avoided the visit this day; she felt herself unfit for exertion, and entreated Mr. Wigstead to make such apologies to Mrs. Greville as she would accept; but Mr. Wigstead rather pressed her to see that lady, as her friendship might, in this instance, be of service to her, in assisting her immediate removal.

Mrs.

Mrs. Greville, however, when she heard that Fanny was indisposed, would come up stairs to see her, and treated her with so much apparent friendship, such unaffected kindness, that Mr. Wigstead, warm in his zeal for his fair *protégée*, could not help hinting that his wife had occasioned her indisposition, by her too readily taking offence at some trifle.

He was going on, but Mrs. Greville instantly so warmly offered her house as an asylum for her lovely young friend, that Fanny was actually debating whether she should accept her friendly offer, and conquer an unaccountable disgust she felt at becoming an inmate of that lady's house, when Mrs. Wigstead returned, and running furiously into the room, regardless of the presence of a stranger, exclaimed with the utmost violence against Fanny, and against her credulous husband, who was either a
fool,

fool, or leagued with an impudent adventuress to impose a cast mistress on her, as a proper governess for her children.

Fanny lifted up her hands and eyes in amazement.

“Aye,” said Mrs. Wigstead, “I have heard all about it; I know all your infamous connection with two gentlemen in the North; deny it if you can, or that you know the Heathcote-farm and its convenient landlady; deny this, you impudent baggage, if you dare. Aye, I know you can’t; my authority is indisputable; so troop, Madam, out of my house this moment.”

Mr. Wigstead, who expected to see Fanny fainting again at this redoubled fury, was astonished to see her regain her composure, in proportion as his wife’s voice

voice 'gained strength, and when at length she ceased for breath, to behold Fanny rise and thus calmly address her.

“ That I could deny, Madam, with the most inviolable truth, all of your assertions that asperse my character, is a comfort to my own mind; young as I am, I am used to calumny, and am forced to seek refuge in conscious innocence. Mr. Wigstead knows my story, and believes me innocent; that the candid, the good, the unprejudiced, believe me so, leaves me nothing to regret; and if, after what you have heard, Madam,” turning to Mrs. Greville, “ you do not retract your generous offer, I do not blush to accept it, and will instantly attend you.”

“ This noble confidence in your own integrity, and in my friendship, my dear, endears you to me for ever; I am totally

[tally without suspicion, nor could the world united tempt me to believe the slightest stigma thrown on a character, so noble, and so ingenuous.”

Fanny, then turning to Mr. Wigstead, gracefully thanked him for his kindness, promising to preserve an affectionate remembrance of it while she lived; then made her adieus to Matthew with a cordial, open air, and formally curtsying to Mrs. and Miss Wigstead, offered to attend Mrs. Greville.

“Take your trumpery with you,” cried Mrs. Wigstead, whom astonishment had kept dumb, “take your trumpery, I say; I’ll have nothing belonging to such a Jezebel in my house.”

Fanny apologized for detaining Mrs. Greville, and, running up stairs, hastily huddled her cloaths into her box, and
was

was returning, when Mr. Wigstead entered.

He opened his arms, and the grateful, affectionate Fanny threw herself into them, while the good man pressed her to his paternal bosom, and wept over her.

A thousand adieus, each more mournful than the other, passed between them; he rejoiced in her meeting with so kind a friend, just when it was most necessary to her; and, fearing to provoke Mrs. Wigstead anew, by lengthening the conference, they returned to the company, and Fanny attended Mrs. Greville to her carriage.

The kind behaviour of that lady commanded her young friend's gratitude, and she promised to endeavour to recover

cover her spirits sufficiently to be of the promised evening party.

When they reached Albemarle-street, a very slight toilette only was permitted, and Fanny was put in possession of a very pretty apartment, where, however, she did not long remain, being desirous to shew Mrs. Greville how much she wished to comply with all her requests.

A little before four o'clock Mr. Monteith arrived, and before he was seated, a very elegant coronet carriage set down Lord Montraville. He was introduced to Fanny as a particular friend of Mrs. Greville's, who almost instantly began to inform Mr. Monteith that Miss Vincent was at length become her inmate, and scrupled not to alledge almost the whole of the scene she had been witness to, as the reason which had brought about so pleasing an event.

Fanny

Fanny was confused at hearing her affairs so openly discussed before an entire stranger, as Lord Montraville was to her. No being could be more unreserved than Fanny, yet her soul shrunk from placing confidence in strangers, and she was perplexed with a thousand questions, which being put with more art than they were answered, drew from her almost a full account of her life, before she was well aware how much intelligence she had communicated.

More company arrived before five, which was the dinner-hour, but Fanny grew every moment more indisposed; she sat down however at table, and endeavoured to make the best of it. She was seated next to Lord Montraville, who endeavoured to amuse and please her, by every possible assiduity.

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This nobleman was no longer young; his face and figure were uncommonly handsome, his manners mild and noble, polished to the highest degree of refinement; he was sensible and polite, entertaining in conversation, and insinuating in his attentions; so that Fanny was pleased with her companion, though sorry he knew already so much of her story.

Her indisposition every moment increased; Mrs. Greville said it was nervous, and attributed it to some unpleasant events which had occurred in her sight that morning. Fanny was glad all the company were not confidential friends of Mrs. Greville.

However she swallowed, in obedience to Mrs. Greville and his Lordship, two glasses of Madeira, which, being more than she was accustomed to, were meant

to

to exhilarate her spirits, and afterwards one of champagne was so strongly recommended by Mr. Monteith that it was drunk, as Fanny was unaccustomed to resistance.

She was not however displeased when the carriages drew up, for as the ladies continued at the dining-table, she knew not how much more wine might have been so warmly recommended; and, ill as she felt herself, she was handed to the carriage with Mrs. Greville, Lord Montraville, and Mr. Monteith, and they proceeded to the Pantheon.

It was one of those nights, when by some unaccountable caprice all London crouds to one spectacle, and every creature in the metropolis was at the Pantheon. The heat was excessive, and Fanny, who became really very unwell, was extremely overcome; the wine had
not

not raised her spirits, and she looked around the gay crowd with the melancholy reflection, "And in all this concourse, there is not one being who is interested for me."

Lord Montraville beheld the sadness of her heart on her expressive countenance, and endeavoured by the gentlest attentions to exhilarate her spirits. She attributed her lowness to indisposition, and would fain have left the room, but Mrs. Greville, who loved bustle, and public places, declared it would do her good, besides the crowd was so great it was impossible to get away.

Fanny was led to a seat near one of the outlets, by Lord Montraville, where he engaged her in conversation, which he well knew how to make agreeable to her, while Mrs. Greville, and the rest of the party moved with the crowd.

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At length she grew so evidently worse as to alarm his Lordship, who, calling Mrs. Greville, represented the necessity of Fanny's returning home so warmly, that the carriages were called, and about three in the morning they reached Albemarle-street.

The drooping girl was put to bed, and in the morning her fever was so high, that a physician, who was called in, declared it highly dangerous; and Mrs. Greville's first act of friendship was in procuring her abundant attendance.— She was soon insensible to every thing that passed around her, and lay in a most alarming situation.

Mrs. Greville was a handsome woman of forty-seven; she was the widow of a captain in the army, who had been shot in an engagement, when she was about four-and-twenty; her gay turn ill accorded

corded with the smallness of her income, and for some time she tried to confine her expences within the narrow bounds of economy, but some means offering, by which she could enlarge her system, and indulge her inclinations, she stumbled not at trifles, and had ever since been enabled to figure away in the gay world, with some aspersions, which chased her from the strictly virtuous, but with so many attractions as drew round her a constant circle of the gay, the dissipated, and the extravagant; as her age matured, she thought proper to call some auxiliaries in aid of her own beauty, and formed a strict league with Monteith, who found in her an able associate, as the plausibility of her manners easily drew in the unwary to depend on her.

Besides the occasional tribute, still paid to her ripened charms, she contrived to keep in her house a constant succession

of younger females, which secured her the assiduous attendance, and liberal friendship of many young men of fashion, who found a singular convenience of their connection with Mrs. Greville.

Among these friends, Lord Montraville was the noblest and the richest, was the most liberal and the most distinguished; his Lordship was a warm friend to the sex, and, though fond of variety, was strongly attracted by elegance and sentiment. For him Monteith and Mrs. Greville had instantly destined the helpless Fanny, who, unsuspecting of the snares laid for her, had blindly fallen into them, and was now open to all their machinations.

Her fever continued with extreme violence for fifteen days, when her recollection returned, and, though extremely weak,

weak, gave signs of amendment. Change of air was prescribed, and Mrs. Greville resolved to take her to a villa near town, where she frequently passed some time; the house, indeed, belonged to his Lordship, but among friends such trifles are wholly unimportant, and it was unnecessary to mention it at all to Fanny.

To this villa then they removed, and here Fanny slowly recovered some degree of strength. She had informed both Mr. Wigstead and Lady Susan de Grey of the few events that had happened to her, and while she anxiously waited for some reply, had written again and again to both these dear friends.

One day, before either her strength or her spirits were recruited, in spite of the kind attention of Mrs. Greville and Lord Montraville, who was almost constantly at the villa, a letter was

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brought

brought her, from Bath, as the post-mark declared.

It was from Lady Susan certainly, she begged permission to retire to read it.

"Oh no," Mrs. Greville and Lord Montraville, both insisted on her reading it there.

She opened it, and though it was very short, her eyes were rivetted on the paper for some minutes; at last they closed, the letter fell to the ground, and Fanny fell back senseless in her chair.

The efforts of her two kind friends recovered her from this, only to fall into successive fainting fits, which were too much for her weak state, and she was again carried to her bed.

Mrs. Greville kindly sat by her bedside, and when she was a little more

composed, Fanny said, " Did you see the note, Madam?"

" Here it is my love," said Mrs. Greville, " it seems to have affected you very much."

" Well it might, Madam," said Fanny, " be so good as to read it to me, I can bear it now."

Mrs. Greville would have excused herself, but Fanny entreated, and that kind friend could not resist her soft entreaties; she then read as follows:

" TO MISS VINCENT.

" Suffer me, Madam, to apologize
" for my sister's not answering your re-
" peated letters, and to entreat you
" will write no more. More suitable to
" your former delicacy would it have
C 3 " been,

“ been, had you taken the hint from
“ her silence, and not written such let-
“ ters as she blushed to receive. From
“ calumny our hearts ever recoiled; you
“ have known us superior to that; but
“ from such accumulated proofs of de-
“ ceit and infamy, from the writer of
“ such letters—but I am too warm; I
“ meant to be more cautious; I forget
“ myself in giving way to such freedom,
“ and beg leave to remain,

“ Miss Vincent’s

“ very humble servant,

“ DE GRÈY.”

“ Oh, my love,” said Mrs. Greville,
“ what a note! What can this infa-
mous aspersion mean?”

“ He is misinformed,” said Fanny,
“ my ill fate pursues me even here.”

“ Misin-

"Misinformed!" said Mrs. Greville, "impossible! he has some base plan in view, which this vile note is to assist. Rise superior, my sweet girl, to such vile aspersions, and glory in your real, your conscious innocence."

"I will try, Madam," said Fanny, faintly.

And she did try; she endeavoured to be composed, and drive the heart-rending billet from her mind. She saw not in it the gentle, the generous Lord de Grey; the candid and ingenuous mind, the affectionate and faithful heart; she strove to forget she had ever been happier, and yielded with a good grace to Mrs. Greville's endeavours to amuse her.

They returned to London, and tho' weak, as Fanny's sufferings were not

acute, she mingled in the parties, and strove to be chearful; she felt her pride offended, and her dignity injured by the treatment of Lord de Grey. She called it unmanly, cruel, to persecute an undefended, a helpless female so bitterly, and she tried to turn her mind to the insinuating attentions of Lord Montraville; she liked him exceedingly, she felt an affectionate regard for him, which his charming manners were peculiarly calculated to improve; his conversation was ever pleasing, always entertaining, and often interesting. She willingly attended to him; and, out of compliment to her ill health, Mrs. Greville saw but little other company; even Mr. Monteith called but seldom.

One evening the opera was proposed, and as Lord Montraville had a box, Fanny thought she could bear the fatigue, and agreed to go, particularly as
Mrs.

Mrs. Greville, who was evidently fond of amusements, refused many parties on her account.

The opera was a very fine one, and Fanny, whose soul was harmony itself, gave herself up delighted to the rapture of the music; the dance was beautiful and lively; her spirits were composed by the music, and Lord Montraville was uncommonly agreeable; she yielded to the pleasure of the evening, and her lovely face was once more adorned with smiles, when a lady in the next box said, loud enough for her to hear,—“There’s Lord de Grey, and his intended bride. She is a large fortune, but he does not look at all a gay bridegroom.”

Her smiles, her animation vanished; Lord Montraville remarked her sudden paleness, but she tried to turn it off on

the heat of the house. She dared not instantly look towards the only spot that now interested her, but some minutes afterwards she stole a glance at the box, and beheld Lady Calshot, attended by both her daughters, Lord Haughtonbury, Lord de Grey, and a tall, showy female, whom she supposed to be the destined bride.

Her paleness, her sickness encreased; she turned her attention to the stage, but it would not do; music had lost its charms, one sickening idea had filled her mind, and she was absorbed in her own sad reflections.

When the opera was over, she wished to go home immediately, but Lord Montraville insisted on her taking some refreshment; Mrs. Greville seconding him, she was led to the coffee-room, and seated

ed beside Mrs. Greville, close to the door.

Here, just as she was taking from Lord Montraville a glass of lemonade, Lady Sophia, arm-in-arm with Lord Haughtonbury, and the fair intended, passed; they were talking and laughing very loud, and were followed by Lady Calshot. She still held her lemonade untouched, and Lord Montraville was tenderly entreating her to drink it, as Lord de Grey and Lady Susan passed.

They evidently saw her, and as evidently sought to avoid her; they instantly made way through the crowd; and soon after she beheld them from a distant corner, but she could not help remarking that Lord de Grey had so placed himself, as to be able to observe her, and that he watched her incessantly.

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She drank her lemonade, and still indisposed, again begged to go home, making many excuses to Mrs. Greville for hurrying away;—Lord Montraville instantly took her hand, and as he was obliged to make some stir to obtain a passage, the room being very much crowded, the bustle attracted the notice of Lord de Grey, who, seeing the sick-looking Fanny leading out by Lord Montraville, approached the entrance, and passed her.

Chairs were in waiting. Lord de Grey placed himself in a corner of the stair-case, where he stood as if waiting for some friend; but, ill as Fanny was, she remarked that he observed her very closely, and when the chair was moving off with her, she saw him leave his corner, and return to the coffee-room.

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When she retired to her apartment, sleep came not to her eye-lids; she ruminated on the events of the evening, and as she considered every circumstance relating to Lord de Grey, and the pain those circumstances gave her, the truth flashed upon her mind in a moment, and she wondered she had never before perceived it.

In vain she strove to conceal, even from her own heart, the discovery she had made. In the moment that she saw herself despised, insulted, and avoided, she felt that she loved the being who despised her.

In vain her pride, her delicacy took the alarm; in vain she tried to persuade herself she could yet recall her heart; every moment convinced her that that heart was devoted to a man who had never sought her love, who had ever deemed

deemed her far beneath his notice, and who now believed her guilty, and treated her as infamous.

The loss of Lady Susan's friendship, dearly as she had ever prized it, seemed light in comparison with Lord de Grey's contempt; he, the man she adored, had covered her with obloquy; he not only gave credit to reports her conduct ought to have silenced, but he insulted her adversity with unmanly railing.

"Oh," cried she in agony, "why had I not sooner discovered the secret of my soul! when yet weak and scarcely kindled, I might have extinguished the fire that will now consume me."

Yet she was thankful that her weakness was known only to herself; that Lord de Grey was not privy to the anguish of her soul.

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These painful reflections banished sleep from her pillow, and she came to breakfast next morning, with evident traces of her bad night on her pallid cheeks.

Mrs. Greville rallied her on being so poor a rake; and soon after breakfast, their constant visitor, Lord Montraville, called.

Even his conversation lost its charms to the sick heart of Fanny, but she tried from gratitude to appear pleased and interested; and when he proposed an airing in the park, she acquiesced, and while the carriages were preparing, suffered him to lead her to the window.

Here, on the opposite side of the way, his arms folded, and his hat flapped, she perceived Lord de Grey, stealing along with a slow and thoughtful pace, and when he came opposite Mrs. Greville's house

house he lifted up his eyes for a moment, and seeing Lord Montraville and Fanny, her hand in his, he turned away, and walked faster out of sight.

Fanny strove to conceal her emotions at this sight, fearful lest Lord Montraville should penetrate her soul; and attributing her varying countenance to her ill health, resealed herself till the carriage was ready.

When Lord Montraville was handing her in, she saw Lord de Grey still in the street, evidently watching all that passed, and when the party were all seated, she beheld him turning the corner, with a quick and hurried pace.

Though the morning was fine, and the air serene, the breezes gave no roses to the cheeks of the fair invalid; for the cheerful breath of heaven has no power
over

over the sick at heart. Fanny returned with no more appetite, and no more spirits than she set out; and after a few days more past in the same sort of sick exertion, during most of which she saw Lord de Grey lurking near the house, she tried to persuade Mrs. Greville to leave her at home.

Mrs. Greville began to be tired of a pursuit, which she feared would end in disappointment, and was not averse to seeking to detach Lord Montraville from his affection for Fanny; she willingly enough consented to go without her fair charge, and Lord Montraville acquiesced with some reluctance.

Lord Montraville felt for Fanny a very different attachment from any he had before experienced; when he beheld her unsuspicious innocence, her spotless purity, he shrunk from the thought of seduction;

duction; never had he followed so long a chase; but he could not bear to have recourse to the usual arts which had procured him a quicker success; he trembled to associate Fanny with the idea of contamination. Mrs. Greville remonstrated in vain; he felt more pleasure in a sentimental conversation with Fanny, than he had ever received from the highest actual enjoyments with any other woman; he would even have thought of making her his wife, had not a slight obstacle to that project existed, in the person of a prior claimant, who had long indeed ceased to derive any advantage from her union with his Lordship, but that of bearing his title, and, while she continued to love him with the warmest affection, his heart found any thralldom preferable to her's; yet he treated her with civility; she lived in decent splendor at his estate in the west, and he never bore her any ill will till now that she

she obstructed a marriage with his new charmer, who must yet, in spite of all obstacles, be his, and to her he determined to be for ever faithful.

From this plan of everlasting fidelity, Mrs. Greville prudently sought to detach his Lordship, wisely foreseeing that his instability promised her more real advantages; and she readily assented to Fanny's proposal, of permitting her to remain at home.

Two or three days elapsed in this manner, and at length the succeeding one was fixed for an excursion to a village at some distance, where it was proposed to dine, and return to Albemarle-street in the evening. It was with extreme difficulty the fair invalid prevailed on Lord Montraville to go without her, and to permit the party to take place before her health would allow her to join it.

it; she did prevail, however, and Mrs. Greville, Lord Montraville, and Mr. Monteith set out at a very early hour.

They had not been long gone when the servant came in, and said, "Madam, an elderly gentleman, who said his name was Wigstead, called just now, hoped you were well, and left his compliments, as he was going with his family to Scarborough."

Mortifications had crowded so fast on Fanny, that she was scarce able to support this blow; she gave a tear, a sigh to the loss of her last friend, and her thoughts, ever melancholy, now dwelt on Mr. Wigstead's apparent goodness, then turned to Sinclair-lodge, and thence naturally reverted to Calshot-house. A thousand cruel sensations now rushed upon her mind; she drew from her pocket the fatal billet which had crush-
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ed the reviving embers of her peace, and, gazing on it with a vacant eye, put her white hand to her forehead, while tears dropped on the paper.

As she sat thus lost in bitter reflections, and revolving in her mind the hidden causes of her cruel situation, the door opened.

Stupified with agony she heard it not; she continued immovable. At length a sigh behind her alarmed her, and, looking in a mirror opposite to her, beheld the being ever in her thoughts, gazing stedfastly at the fair frail form before him.

She endeavoured to rise; she faintly articulated, "Lord de Grey!"

The passionate melancholy which she had noticed on his features vanished instantly,

stantly.—He advanced, and bowing, said, “My intrusion is perhaps impertinent?”

She murmured something, but though her lips moved, no sound proceeded; she pointed with her trembling hand to a chair, and Lord de Grey understood and obeyed her.

“I ought to apologise,” said Lord de Grey, with a cold politeness, “for the boldness of my uninvited entrance; but I have long wished to speak to Miss Vincent; our past friendship demands that I should speak to her with freedom, and my wishes for her welfare authorise me to attempt it. May I seize the present opportunity?”

Fanny, bowed; she was unable to speak.

“I should

“I should be sorry, Madam,” resumed he, “that you should think Lady Susan or myself capable of a lightness and inconstancy which are a disgrace to human nature, and totally incompatible with a generous mind; and since we now meet for the last time, let me endeavour to make our excuses for renouncing a friendship, which, pleasing as it ever was, is become impossible to cultivate.”

He paused, expecting an answer, but in vain.

“I will not enlarge upon circumstances which that languid air, so resembling your former delicacy, tells me are yet irksome to you; but to prove to you that strong necessity, and invincible rectitude alone could have torn us from you; let me acknowledge that even now, that I am bound by a solemn engagement

ment to another, I feel I must love you while I live."

To hear that he loved her, at the same moment she also heard they met for the last time, that he was solemnly engaged to another, rent her bosom with the most excruciating agony; she checked, however, her emotions, and determined to hear him to the end.

"Had my judgment justified my passion," continued he, "never would I have forsaken you; nor powerful interest, nor parental authority, could ever have shaken my resolute heart; and even now I conjure you, though you and I must meet no more, yet suffer me to rescue you from your present situation, and seek for you an asylum, where you may recover, in some degree, your lost peace."

"Alas!"

"Alas!" said Fanny, "that is gone for ever."

As she pronounced these words with a downcast look, she clasped her hands in agony, and big drops fell from her eyes.

"Oh," resumed Lord de Grey, in a tone of tenderness, "yet let me bear you from this horrid house, to one fitter even now for your heart."

Her eyes fell upon the fatal note, and her pride was instantly roused.

"I do not understand your Lordship," replied she, "nor am I inclined to receive any favours from the writer of that billet."

"And did it indeed so offend you?" asked he. Were you even then angry that the voice of the tenderest friendship

sought to recall you, and that in spite of your obstinate silence, and unparalleled neglect, those who had loved you continued to love you still! Oh, Miss Vincent, my heart bleeds for you! I see that lovely frame sinking under a situation your heart was never formed for; and even now, would you renounce your errors—would you—Oh, Fanny, so warm is yet the passion you only could inspire, yes I would take—but it is in vain—I only exasperate you.”

“ Your language is so incomprehensible, so injurious, my Lord, that I seek not to understand it; your meaning in your cruel letter I never sought to develope, and you will excuse me now if I seek to retire.”

“ Oh, Fanny! and are you indeed so lost?”

He

He rose, and advancing to her, threw himself on his knees before her, taking her trembling hand, and bathing it with his tears, he lifted his passionate eyes to her fair face, now pallid with extreme fragility, now crimsoned with love and indignation.

“And is it possible? can that face by which we guess at heaven, be deceitful? Oh, Miss Vincent, I have been deceived, and not by you; the evidence of those looks I must trust beyond all proof; yet it cannot be—such damning proofs—” And he rose and walked about disordered.

Fanny attempted to rise, but the effort was beyond her, and she could only say, “My Lord, I am extremely ill, pray leave me.”

He instantly approached her, and bending over the back of her chair, gazed on the trembling angel before him; he then mournfully said, "Will you again admit me, or do we indeed part for ever?"

"You yourself said," replied she, with some firmness, "that we now met for the last time."

"True; oh, God!" cried he; "and for what a horrible reason! then we part not yet. Oh, Miss Vincent, if I have ever given you pain; if it be possible—"

"Pain!" interrupted Fanny, laying her hand on the note—"Agony!"

Her action directed his eyes to the paper; he read it in a moment, and exclaimed, "That note I never wrote."

"No."

"No!" cried Fanny.

"By all that is sacred," said he, again throwing himself on his knees before her, "I am incapable of it; I never saw that paper."

She clasped her two hands together, and resting her forehead on them, remained immovable.

Lord de Grey hid his face in her gown as he knelt before her; she felt him tremble; she felt his bosom heave with convulsive sobs; she involuntarily bent her eyes on his agitated frame, and murmured softly, "Almighty God!"

He instantly raised his eyes to her face, and saw her affected anger vanished;—her gentle eyes, suffused with tears, were tenderly bent on him, and sorrow

and dismay were painted on her countenance.

"Oh, Fanny," said he, "we have both been cruelly deceived; conviction bursts upon my soul, and I see your truth and innocence as evident as your loveliness. Can you, angelic sweetness, can you forgive me?" Again he hid his face.—Fanny remained silent.

"Oh," cried he, starting up, "I have offended beyond pardon. At least pity the pangs—"

"I do from my soul," said she, "I both pity and forgive you; you have been misled."

"Atrociously indeed! But hear me, Miss Vincent, while I swear most solemnly—"

"No,

"No," swear nothing rashly," replied Fanny, "have you not already sworn? Are you not married?" For so she interpreted the engagement he mentioned.

"Not quite," replied he, "though very near it; nor ever will, except to— Oh, Heavens, I speak as if the treasure of my soul was at my call."

He approached; he offered to take her hand, but she withdrew it.

"At least, my Lord, you are under a solemn engagement."

"Never shall that engagement be ratified; when I made it, oh, God, what did I believe, what it now agonizes me to remember. Oh, Fanny, I am wholly your's, and never, never will be another's; whether you accept or reject me, Miss Darnley will never be my wife. Oh,

my love, speak, save me from this dreadful suspense; tell me — yet how can I hope it? Have I not insulted you?”

“That is forgiven,” said she, gently, “you were deluded.”

“Tell me, then,” said he, pressing to his bosom the hand he still held; — tell me — Oh, Fanny, how I have ever loved you! yet I knew it not till the dreadful circumstances which so misled me were related to me; then, in the wild paroxysms of disappointed affection, I consented to all; — then when I first found how much my heart was your’s, I madly promised to vow it to another.”

“And what would you do now?”

“Now! — Oh, cancel every bond, break every promise, take my only love

to my fond bosom, and lose all remembrance but of her."

"Not for me, Sir," said Fanny, "shall you thus violate every solemn engagement."

"Nay, hear me," said she, seeing he was about to interrupt her, "for I am resolved I will not accept the faith which is plighted to another; I will not occasion a breach of promise which shall wound a fellow-creature; I will not occasion your own heart to reproach you."

"And did not this engagement subsist, would you then—"

"Why do you ask me? Why seek to know what might render your duty still more painful?"

D 5

"Oh,

"Oh, transport! she loves me!" exclaimed he.

"Alas!" said Fanny, "if a partnership in misery gives you transport—"

"It shall not, it cannot be misery, with mutual love! Oh, my Fanny, this sweetness gives me new energy! Let me remove you hence, and leave to me the care of our mutual happiness."

"We cannot be happy," said Fanny, "for happiness cannot subsist without honour."

"We will be happy," resumed his Lordship. "We will hope. Do we not love?"

"Alas, yes!" softly sighed she.

"Oh,

"Oh!" cried de Grey, "repeat it in the tone of joy; my Fanny loves me!"

He pressed to his lips the fair hand he held; he gazed in silent rapture on the lovely face of his Fanny; delight glowed on his cheek, and rapture lightened in his eye.

Fanny, more alive to misery than to hope, found it necessary to check his transports, and asked him why she must remove?

He gently hinted to her the infamous situation of Mrs. Greville, and told her he had prepared an asylum for her, before he came to make the trial of her fortitude.

"I dared not hope to find you innocent," said he, "I had such reiterated proofs."

D6

"And

"And how do you know now," said Fanny, faintly smiling, "that I am innocent?"

"Oh," replied he, "doubt is destroyed for ever. When I behold that angelic countenance, that ethereal sweetness, oh, most adored—"

Again he bent on one knee, again he poured forth the warm effusions of his heart, and Fanny heard not unmoved sounds of such pleasing import.

She looked at him with tenderness, she listened to his raptures, her heart joined in them, and the consciousness of his love overpaid her past miseries; then awaking to a sense of all her present ones, the fine glow of her countenance vanished, and her eyes were suffused with tears.

"And

"And we must part," said she, mournfully.

"No, never;" cried he, "we will abandon the world, and in some lone solitude, forgot by others, but happy in ourselves, we will live for each other only; peace shall smile on our dwelling, and humble contentment shall crown our homely cottage; recollection shall sometimes live over past scenes, to render the present still more delightful, and awake only to our mutual tenderness; nothing shall have power to disturb our placid happiness."

"Alas! alas!" said Fanny, "and will no remorse for broken promises, no regret for deluded friends, no reproaches for parental anger, invade your peace? And how should I, the fatal cause of all your misdeeds, how should I preach tranquillity, when in me you would behold

hold the unworthy being for whom you broke your plighted faith, for whom you incurred a father's curse? You would see me with horror, and even your tenderness could not save me from the anguish of your remorse! No, my Lord, we may be unhappy, but let it not be by our own faults; the paths of duty may be thorny, but in the end they lead to peace. We must meet no more."

"And can you, Fanny, with such tranquillity, speak of parting? No we will part no more. I know what it is to love. Love cannot comfort with such—"

"Hold, my Lord, reproach me not; could you see the agony of my heart, you would not suspect me of coldness. I do not blush to acknowledge that I am capable of loving you, for I am also capable of sacrificing my own happiness to
your

your peace; never could you know it while your heart could so bitterly reproach you."

While she spoke, he gazed at her with an air of wildness;—"Come," said he, "let us leave this cursed house; the accents of virtue ought not to be breathed in this polluted air."

"And where am I to go?" asked Fanny.

"To my aunt's, Lady Margaret de Grey; who is prepared to receive and to love you."

"Good God!" said she, "explain."

"By-and-bye; come now, for my heart is bursting;—I am mad with agony."

"Would

"Would I could console you!" said she tenderly, "would I could heal your wounds; but time, and the consciousness of perfect rectitude alone can cure them."

"The remedy is too slow and too painful, I shall find another."

"My God! Lord de Grey, what do you mean?"

"Oh, do not ask me!" said he, walking about in disorder; "but come, shall we go?"

"No;" said Fanny, approaching him, and taking his hand; "not till you are composed; my dearest Lord, be gentle, be resigned, you would not be so daring; Oh, Lord de Grey, pity me; at least do not murder me. We are all born to suffer; and those who suffer best shall be
most

most splendidly rewarded ; and shall you, whose excellence, whose virtue is so conspicuous, shall you yield to the misfortunes of the moment, when time may bring so sovereign a remedy ?”

“ Oh, Fanny !” said he, gazing in her face, “ oh that you did not love me ; I could better bear your indifference than this killing sweetness, when—”

“ Alas ! my Lord, think not so ; we shall be ever friends ; and though, when you are married, we shall meet no more, ever will you be pursued with my best wishes.”

“ And what will they avail me when you are lost to me for ever. Oh, sweetest Fanny, look not so gentle, so resigned, so miserable ; I cannot bear it, upon my soul I cannot.”

“ Alas !”

"Alas! my Lord, should you then be better pleased, to see me wildly arraigning the dispensations of the Almighty? Oh, Lord de Grey, you must also be resigned and patient, for these untoward events it rests not with us to change."

"But come," resumed he, "I cannot know the shadow of peace while you remain in this vile house. Lady Margaret, the best of human beings, longs to fold to her bosom the penitent angel I promised her; oh, with what rapture will she embrace the most exalted, as well as the most lovely of her sex!"

"And what right have I to intrude on your family, branded as I am by obloquy and shame? Oh, My Lord, let me seek some obscure retirement?"

"You

"You shall seek what you will hereafter," interrupted he; "but where can you fly now? You have the best claim on the kindness of Lady Margaret, innocence and misfortune. Come, my fairest, my sweetest love, oh, come!"

She withdrew her hand; which he offered to take. "You must be moderate and resigned," said she; "I am ready, my Lord, to attend you; but should I not leave a note for Mrs. Greville?"

"To clear yourself from the aspersion of being gone away with some unworthy wretch, but not from motives of civility to her. Has she deserved any attention from you?"

"I confess she has not, my Lord, but to vindicate myself I will write"—and having left a short billet on the table for
Mrs.

Mrs. Greville, she permitted Lord de Grey to lead her to his chariot.

“And you have then trusted yourself to my care,” said he, as he seated himself beside her. “Oh, my love, what a noble condescension !”

“All my misfortunes,” said Fanny, faintly smiling, “have not yet taught me suspicion, though all imputable to the machinations of my fellow-creatures ; but I trust no experience will ever teach me to doubt the honour of Lord de Grey.”

“God forbid I ever should deceive you !” replied he, “You whom my soul adores in all purity and truth ! Oh, Fanny, if you knew how you reign in every fibre of this agitated frame ; if you knew—”

“Hush,”

"Hush, my Lord, it is better I should be ignorant of, and you should forget sentiments which ought no longer to subsist."

"Cruel Fanny, to recall my attention to so heart-piercing a subject!"

"Lament rather," replied she, "that such a subject exists, than that I have recalled your mind to it; and ever remember, that the pain with which we fulfill our duty, never fails to be fully rewarded in the end, while those enjoyments obtained by the sacrifice of virtue, bring misery and remorse in their train."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Lord de Grey, "that I must quit her!"

"My Lord," resumed Fanny, "you must promise me to be composed; you know

know not how much my heart is interested in your welfare."

"Indeed!"

"Can you doubt it? Oh, Lord de Grey, if it will ever give a moment's comfort to your mind to know that I do feel the tenderest interest in your well-being, believe it ever; for never, never, can this heart be given—yet too much of this."

"Oh, proceed, my angel—with such an assurance I defy the malice of fortune. Why should my Fanny hesitate to pronounce my happiness? the only happiness I can ever know is to feel assured that I am dear to you."

"Then rest assured of it, my Lord, and believe me when I declare, that never can my heart receive another lord;—
never,

FANNY.

never shall this hand be plighted at the altar, in injury to the faith it is my pride to owe to you."

"And never, never, I swear—"

"Oh, swear not," interrupted she, "or swear only never to violate the laws of rectitude and duty."

He was silent, but he seized her passive hand, and pressing it alternately to his lips and his bosom, he gazed in her face, while drops of mingled rapture and agony rolled down his manly cheeks.

Some little further conversation, in which he promised her to compose his mind, and to attempt nothing desperate, brought them to Lady Margaret's house in Portman-square, and Fanny's heart beat violently as the carriage stopped at the door.

CHAP.

FANNY.

C H A P. VI.

WHEN they reached Lady Margaret's, Lord de Grey, ever kind and attentive, led her into a small room, while he ran up stairs to acquaint his aunt, who came down in a very few moments.

Lord de Grey led her into the room, he flew to Fanny, he took her hand, he presented her with a graceful air to Lady Margaret, who instantly held out her arms to embrace her with so kind a manner, that Fanny, whose heart was ever open to confidence and affection, received and returned her embrace with warmth and gratitude.

“ Oh,

"Oh, be it ever thus!" exclaimed Lord de Grey; "and may the two most amiable of women be ever thus united!"

"And I foresee," cried Lady Margaret, "that we shall be strictly united, for I feel my heart already warmly attached to your lovely choice, and indeed de Grey, I sincerely wish that choice could be successful."

A short conversation ensued, in which Lady Margaret made the warmest professions of affection to Fanny, and with an air of sincerity it was impossible to doubt. Fanny said little, she was too much overcome to be eloquent, but her face beamed with the tenderest expression of gratitude and love.

While Lady Margaret was assuring her nephew of her protection and assistance in his cause, Fanny directed her

attention to this excellent woman; her age might be about forty-eight, her figure was noble and commanding, her actions and gestures were graceful and dignified, her face bore the evident traces of superior beauty, and superior intelligence; her large black eyes yet penetrated the soul, yet expressed the uncommon force of her understanding, while candour and benevolence spoke an unerring language in her smiles, and sincerity and goodness were her prevailing characteristics; she appeared to idolise her nephew, whom she had always received at her house during the vacation, and Lord de Grey felt for her the veneration due to a parent, with the confidence and affection of an equal friend. Such was the amiable, the distinguished protectress he had procured for his Fanny, whose heart expanded towards her, and seemed to lose in the consciousness of her friendship, all remembrance of past mortifications.

Lord

Lord de Grey made not a long visit; he promised to endeavour to develope the plots which had entangled them, and once more putting the hand of his beloved, into that of his maternal friend, kissed the united pledges of his affection, and gazing on each with eyes glistening with mingled grief, love and joy, bowed and withdrew.

Fanny, now left alone with Lady Margaret, experienced from her all the attention of the kindest and most tried friendship, and finding her not fully instructed in the eventful tale of her life, related to her every occurrence that had happened to her, not omitting the scene of the morning with Lord de Grey, nor the confession he had drawn from her of her tenderness for him, a confession for which she now blamed herself, considering the peculiar difficulties of his present situation.

E. 2

“ My

“ My dear,” said Lady Margaret, “ there are cases in which a cold heart alone can control the powerful impulse of the moment, but were I to argue from my own feelings, even considering all the peculiarities of de Grey’s situation, yet putting myself in his case, and even supposing myself married to Miss Darnley, the confession you have made would be a source of peculiar comfort; for tho’ it be impossible to derive from it the advantages naturally attending it, yet the human heart is so framed as to require the certainty of being loved by the object of its affection, to acquire any degree of peace; judge by yourself, my love, for the tenderness and delicacy of your feelings render you the fittest to decide, are you not better pleased, even though my nephew is engaged, to know that he adores you as he does?”

“ I cannot

"I cannot deny it, Madam," replied Fanny, "yet my reason condemns the pleasure my heart takes in it as selfish, and more consulting my own gratification than his, since he would surely be happier could he love his intended —"

Her voice faltered, and Lady Margaret resumed, "Yet you ought, judging thus by yourself, to conclude, that he has also the same secret store of happiness to resort to, in the sweet consciousness of a mutual affection; this is, I own, a dangerous doctrine, it is only to be truly comprehended by two virtuous hearts, and such as your's and my nephew's, which, ever free from the least stain of guilt, can never take an improper advantage of your mutual consciousness, are alone qualified to be taught my system. I have entered into all my nephew's uneasiness, and I share all his transports at finding how unfounded

were the calumnies he had heard. When he came up just now to announce you to me, you would have loved him for the warmth of his manner; it was impossible to doubt one instant on beholding you, and he hated himself for having ever listened to the artful tales;—but I believe I need not bid you love him.”

“ Would to God I might indulge what I feel,” replied Fanny, “ without a sense of criminality!”

The following morning Lady Susan flew into the arms of her friend; great was their joy at meeting again affectionate and kind; their conversation was long and tender, every doubt was subsided, and all was sweetest confidence.

Lady Susan informed her that Mr. Cecil was still detained by the litigious spirit of some competitors for his estate,
and

and that they had sent for assistance to carry on a law-suit against him, that this rendered the period of his return uncertain."

Fanny remarked with pleasure the entire unreserve that subsisted between Lady Margaret and the younger part of the family, and that the superiority of her character was so tempered by her benevolence, that instead of restraining, it encouraged their openness, since they were sure of meeting with kindness and wholesome counsel united; and on this remark she warmly expatiated to Lady Margaret, after Lady Susan was gone, concluding with her own happiness in meeting such a protectress.

Lady Margaret folded her to her bosom, and warmly expressed her wish that her nephew had not been so hampered.

Three days more elapsed, and Fanny wondered she saw not Lord de Grey; she admired his prudence, and endeavoured to imitate it, in appearing easy;—yet why, would she ask herself, should I be surprized? ought he to seek my company, when his hand is destined for another? his time, his attention, are properly devoted to his destined wife.

Fanny wondered at the little acquaintance there seemed to subsist between Lady Margaret and Lord and Lady Calshot, but her maternal friend one day explained it to her, by giving her a short history of her life.

“She was left,” she said, “very young to the care of her brother, but not dependent on him, as the old Earl her father had been economical, and had liberally provided for younger children, yet so young was she left under his management,

nagement, that she had long looked up to him as to a father, and when he married, was disposed to treat Lady Calshot with all possible respect.

“ Lady Calshot, however, was one of those common and undisguised characters which soon cease to command either attention or respect; and though both Lord Calshot and myself were proud, our tempers but ill assimilated, as our motives for pride were totally different; his was the pride of rank and fortune, mine of human nature; as I gained judgment I discovered this difference, when an event happened which set it in a stronger light.

“ I was about twenty, when I was addressed by Lord Rupilsford; this nobleman, of an ancient family, and high precedence, disgraced his rank by meanness, and his immense wealth by parsimony;

mony; his judgment was narrow, and his understanding limited; seeing, I despised him, and despising I refused him, while I encouraged the ardent passion of a bashful youth, who scarce dared aspire to the heart, while he humbly adored the mind and form of Lady Margaret de Grey.

“ St. Aubyn, about twenty-four, was perhaps the most perfect model of man; his figure was graceful and well-formed, active and enduring; his soul was capacious, and his spirit unconquerable, his understanding was excellent, and his heart was faultless; brave, ardent, warm, he was tender, melting, and affectionate; haughty to all the reptiles of the earth, his heart glowed with a generous confidence in the excellent of his kind, while with me he was humble, fearful, and reserved; I delighted in a spirit so noble, and, if I may say it, so like my
own

own; and even now, dwell too much on a portrait that ever charmed me to enthusiasm.

“ I felt that we were kindred minds, and encouraged him to avow his love; of mine I made no secret, and declared my intention to marry him; my brother was all rage! St. Aubyn, a poor commoner! should he marry Lord Calshot's sister? Never, never!

“ He swore it,—and he kept his oath!

“ The gallant youth was in the navy, and though it was then a time of profound peace, was suddenly ordered to sea, on an obscure expedition, where neither fame nor riches were to be reaped, though it was highly dangerous.

“The event was as it may be expected;—he fell, and no praises recorded his fall, no monument of a grateful nation perpetuated his memory; but he lives here, and here will live, while I exist.

“Since then my brother and I are no longer on terms of cordiality; we meet, but as acquaintance, not as friends; yet I love to see in my nephew all the noble qualities of my murdered St. Aubyn—I cherish him, though I despise his father.”

Lady Margaret shed some tears; Fanny wept abundantly; she beheld the only true nobility of spirit bowed down by an irreparable loss, and though a sufferer, a severe one, by the cruel maxims of the world, not the less indulgent to the inclinations of others; she revered
and

and loved the being who united such proud fortitude with such kind condescension, and was more than ever attached to Lady Margaret.

Fanny saw Lady Susan almost every day, but she persisted in an obstinate silence respecting her brother, and Fanny, who imagined he had followed her counsels, and was reconciling himself to his father, would not be the first to break it; she tried to rejoice at a conduct she allowed to be proper, and quarrelled with her feelings, for refusing to dwell on it with pleasure.

Early on the fifth morning however of her residence with Lady Margaret, before the breakfast was well removed, Lord de Grey entered; a thousand mixed emotions were pictured on his expressive face, but the moment he cast his eyes on Fanny, joy predominated.

“ Oh,

"Oh, Fanny," I am come to tell you that I am master of my fate, or rather that you are it's mistress, for you must ever be the sole arbitress of my destiny."

"What do you mean?" cried Fanny, amazed.

"I mean," replied he, "that I am free from all engagement with Miss Darnley, and fully at liberty to offer to you my hand—my heart, how long have you possessed it!"

"Oh, Sir!" cried Fanny, her astonishment encreasing as he spoke, "explain yourself more clearly."

"Tell me first," exclaimed he, "that you will be mine, mine instantly, mine wholly!"

"I must first know," replied she, "whether I ought to be so; in that case,

—Tell me, Lord de Grey, what has happened?"

He would have repeated his solicitations, but she so positively refused to give him any answer, till she knew on what grounds he was authorised to address her, that he was obliged to abandon his request, and gave her the following relation.

“ The three days that have elapsed since I left you here have been fully employed; I have detected a long train of artifice and calumny, and I scarcely know whether I shall have skill enough to develope it, especially to you; certain that some artifices had been employed to blacken your reputation, and to persuade your friends that you had wholly forsaken them, as Susan had never received a line from you since you left Mr. Wigstead; I waited on that gentleman,

gentleman, whom I found inclined to be still warmly your friend, notwithstanding he had been frequently turned away from Mrs. Greville's door on some frivolous pretence."

"Good God!" exclaimed Fanny, "and I was lamenting and wondering that Mr. Wigstead had abandoned me, for I ever loved and respected him."

"I explained to him," continued Lord de Grey, the nature of my suspicions, and informed him of what he was ignorant of, the character of Mrs. Greville; you would have been affected to have seen the good man's emotions when he heard this; he accused himself of having betrayed you into the snare, and said, "that had you not escaped, he should never have known another minute's peace."

"We

"We then together went to seek Monteith, the tool and instrument of a thousand villainies; as he is totally without spirit, we easily brought him to confess that you were taken into Mrs. Greville's family, and treated with peculiar kindness, in order to be delivered up to Lord Montraville; that the idea had first struck him while he was travelling with you; and that, but for Lord Montraville's scruples, the affair would have been concluded long ago; that they seldom suffered such things to be so long in hand, and that Mrs. Greville began to be tired; he added, that she had destroyed all letters that you wrote or ought to have received, that she refused admittance to any of your friends, and that she had published it pretty generally among her acquaintance, that you had been turned off by Sir John Sinclair, and was now protected by Lord Montraville."

"Oh,"

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Fanny, "can I support such ignominy!"

Her tears flowed violently, and it required all the efforts of Lady Margaret and her nephew to restore her composure.

Lord de Grey would have postponed the remainder of his recital, but what was to come was yet more interesting to Fanny, and she entreated him to proceed.

"We then took Monteith with us," continued his Lordship, "to Mrs. Greville's, where we found her and Lord Montraville, vexed and angry at your escape; we confronted the infamous wretch with her servile tool, and pressed the business so home to her, that she confessed to every thing, and confirmed Monteith's declaration.

"Lord

"Lord Montraville behaved extremely well, he expressed himself glad you had escaped such devilish toils, and said, "he would not presume now to wait upon you, but if at some future period you could bear him in your sight, he would be charmed with an opportunity of proving his repentance to you."

"Pray is not Lord Montraville, a Fitzroy?" said Lady Margaret.

"Yes; said Lord de Grey, he was Lord Frederic Fitzroy, second son to the Duke of Charleville, but was gratified with a peerage, on account of some services to the crown."

"I thought so," replied Lady Margaret.

"Lord Montraville," said Fanny, "has uniformly treated me with respect
and

and kindness, and though his intentions were certainly blameable, I feel myself on the whole obliged to him for thinking me worthy of the deference he ever observed towards me, and for those delays which have saved me."

"From Mrs. Greville's," resumed Lord de Grey, "we returned to Mr. Wigstead's, where the whole truth was laid before Mrs. Wigstead; she did not appear very open to conviction, but could not refuse her assent to what we advanced. From thence I proceeded alone to Miss Darnley, where I procured myself a complete discharge, of which I will not explain the particulars."

"I entreat you," interrupted Fanny.

"Pray do," cried Lady Margaret.

But

But they could only prevail on his Lordship to say, "that in the course of conversation, he contradicted a sentiment of the lady's, which ill accorded with his ideas of female propriety, and that she, who was unaccustomed to have her words combated, retorted so fiercely, and defended her own opinions with such ungoverned fury, that he exclaimed, Thank God, we are not yet married.— Nor ever shall be, cried the lady furiously; and with more violence than became a female, commanded his Lordship to leave her house, and never to see her more. He bowed and obeyed her.

"After this scene," continued his Lordship, "I flew to my father's, whose heart had ever been set on this marriage, as Lord Annandale had been his first friend, and he was anxious to unite me to his daughter. My father saw that something had disturbed me, by the
traces

traces of emotion yet visible in my countenance; I will not pretend to say joy did not reign in my heart, but I strove to conceal it, while I related to Lord Calshot the scene which had just passed between myself and Miss Darnley. He thought proper to be extremely offended with me, and when I professed my fixed intention never to seek to renew the connexion her violence had dissolved, he overwhelmed me with his reproaches, and finding it impossible to prevail over my resolution, I am sorry to say, my father forbid me his house."

"I am sorry too, indeed," cried Fanny, "for I cannot bear such breaches between the dearest of all relations. Oh, Lord de Grey, will you not seek to be reconciled to your father?"

"His anger is yet too green," replied his Lordship; "for though I have contracted

tracted my account, and given it you without interruption, yet from several unavoidable delays it has filled up the whole of the time since I left you here, and it was late last night that I incurred the anger of my father."

"And do you not mean to seek a reconciliation with him?"

"Indeed I do," replied Lord de Grey, "for I assure you I am very ill at ease under the sense of his anger, yet I fear nothing will induce him to forgive me, but the powerful intercession of Miss Darnley, and that I can never wish to obtain."

Fanny sighed and was silent; then, with a smile of inexpressible sweetness, the tear of grateful sensibility standing in her eye, she thanked him for his activity in rescuing her name from obloquy:

"Though

"Though, alas!" said she, "I fear the cruel stigma thrown on it will never be effaced."

"It is effaced already," cried Lord de Grey, passionately. "Who can behold that angel countenance, and breathe one base suspicion? Oh, Fanny! when you are mine—And will you not be mine?"

She shook her head and was silent.

"What may this mean?" said he, with emotion.

"Oh, my Lord!" cried she, mildly, "would you seek at such a moment to incur afresh the displeasure of Lord Calshot? Would you tempt his further anger? Come to me when reconciled to him, and authorized by him, and dispose of me.—"

"That

"That is bidding me for ever forego the sweet hope of calling you mine," resumed his Lordship.

"Are you conscious of that?" said Fanny, "and can you wish to act otherwise than as such a consciousness dictates? But if you please we will drop the subject for the present, we are both too much agitated to think or reason clearly."

Lady Margaret seconded Fanny's advice, and told her nephew how much wiser it would be to wait some favourable change, than to persist in finishing every thing, while every spirit was agitated.

Lord de Grey unwillingly acquiesced, and it was determined that he should see Fanny occasionally, but that he should not seek to press her to a marriage till

he had endeavoured to reconcile his father on his own terms.

That very afternoon Mr. Wigstead paid a visit to Fanny; their meeting was affectionate, and graced with mutual tears; he renewed his professions of friendship, and offers of service with so much cordiality, as delighted Lady Margaret; and in answer to Fanny's enquiries after Mrs. Moreland, told her, "That Mr. Moreland was gone to the West-Indies, on some law employment, relative to a contested estate; and that had he not found her established in so pleasing a manner, he should have petitioned her to grant her company for a short time to Mrs. Moreland, who was prevented by her situation from leaving her country residence."

Some days elapsed, on every one of which Fanny saw Lord de Grey; he
was

was extremely melancholy, and evidently disturbed, but he mentioned not the reason of his uneasiness, though it was clear that the prohibition of the subject nearest his heart exceedingly distressed him. Lady Susan called occasionally, but always by herself, and with an air of mystery; she freely indulged her fond friendship for Fanny, and her respectful love for her aunt, yet her visits were short, and conducted with some management.

Fanny remarked this, and drew from her the mystery; Lord and Lady Calshot were apprized of her residence with Lady Margaret, and had not only studiously forborn any visits there, but had even prohibited all intercourse between the two young ladies and their aunt. Lady Sophia, from her more trifling turn, felt no great uneasiness at the prohibition, nor ever desired to infringe it,

“But for me,” said Lady Susan, “besides my love and respect for my aunt, the dear cause of this injunction has too many claims on my heart, not to induce me to hazard something for the sake of seeing her.”

Fanny embraced her affectionate friend, but the communication sunk deep in her heart, and she meditated a scheme which in about a week she mentioned to Lady Margaret.

That benevolent protectress was lamenting that Fanny's spirits did not seem to recover, and with the most soothing counsels was endeavouring to cheer her sick mind, when Fanny, the tears starting into her eyes, took Lady Margaret's hand, which she kissed, and said, “Do not think me ungrateful for your goodness, dearest Lady Margaret, that I am still so weak; alas! have I not cause?

cause? Do I not prevent the visits of your brother to you? and is my unfortunate presence of use to any one? A burden on your compassionate heart, I force you to waste in sadness those hours which ought to be given to enjoyment. Proscribed by calumny from society, I am even assiduously shunned, and it is vain to hope that those who forbear to visit you, because I am here, should be so far softened in my favour as to permit your nephew's attachment. Dearest Madam, my stay here can do no good; Lord de Grey will better recover his spirits when I am gone, and Mrs. Moreland will, I am sure, receive me with pleasure."

Lady Margaret, however, strenuously opposed this proposal, her affection for Fanny taught her to find in her society, a compensation for those friends who deserted her, and the strong love she

bore her nephew made her think with horror of robbing him of the comfort of beholding the idol of his heart ; she represented to Fanny the vacancy she should feel when deprived of her, how long the evenings would appear, and how slowly her time would pass, and so tenderly entreated her to banish the idea, that it was with great reluctance Fanny persisted in her request.

“Do me the justice to believe, my dear Madam,” resumed she, “that it is not without infinite regret I have opened my eyes to the propriety of my departure. To say no more, since you wish it so, of the coolness I occasion from Lord Calshot towards you, yet with respect to myself and Lord de Grey, your benevolence alone blinds you to the necessity of our separation ; it is totally improbable we should ever be united ; and surely then it is imprudent,
by

by such intimate and frequent meetings, to strengthen an attachment we ought not to indulge; while we see each other every day, how is it possible we should seek to reconcile our minds to the fatal necessity of parting. Lord de Grey, when I am gone, may be reconciled to his father, and shall I uphold such a son in a breach of his duty? Can I bear to behold such a young man, born to a better fate, wasting his youth and health in pining and melancholy, proscribed by his friends and miserable in himself? Can I see this and know myself the cause of it, without shuddering, without seeking to remedy these cruel evils?"

Her tears, her agitation, interrupted her voice, and Lady Margaret, tenderly pressing her hand, said, "Excellent young creature! you are indeed superior to the weakness of humanity; your just judgement, your feeling heart, your

noble unreserve challenge my warmest admiration. Yes, you shall go; dear as you are to my heart, you shall prosecute your noble purpose; but think not that de Grey will forget you; he has too true a taste of excellence not to love, to reverence, to adore you still more for this noble trait: could he teach his heart to forget you, I would disown him; you, who know how to blend the tenderest sensibility with the most inviolable delicacy, the warmest heart with the best judgement, be assured your memory, your virtues will ever live in my bosom; I will cherish your idea with that of my St. Aubyn, for you are noble like him."

- Lady Margaret held out her arms to her young friend, who flew to her embrace, and sobbed on her maternal bosom. She entreated her not to mention her design to Lord de Grey, as he would certainly

certainly seek to detain her, and she could not trust to her own strength to combat his solicitations.

Lady Margaret promised to be silent, and Fanny retired to write to Mrs. Moreland. That lady received her proposal with delight, and pressed her to hasten her journey; but when it came to the moment of separation, Fanny found her fortitude waver, and she scarcely dared trust herself alone. The preceding evening was melancholy and affectionate, and early the succeeding morning she set off in a post-chaise and pair, quitting with infinite regret the valuable and dear aunt of Lord de Grey.

She steadfastly refused Lady Margaret's offer of sending her own woman with her. She stood in need of no assistance, and any companion would have been a restraint on her own thoughts; attended

therefore only by a courier, she determined to advance as much as possible, and to reach Mrs. Moreland's the second night.

The parting with Lady Margaret had infinitely affected her; she endeavoured to restrain her tears, but they would not be controlled, and she had already lost sight of London when she fell into a train of composed reflection.

"I have then," said she to herself, "entirely abandoned Lord de Grey; I have foregone the sweet pleasure of seeing him, of hearing the assurances of his unabating love: what will he not suffer when he finds I am gone—and when he is not entrusted with the place of my abode? Ah! Lord de Grey, you will accuse me of an inflexibility I little feel; you will call me cruel and unkind; but can you suffer more from
this

this separation than I do, who avoid you purposely to promote a reconciliation with your father, and what horrible events does not that necessarily draw after it? Dear Lady Margaret will be exposed to all the violence of his first emotions; even she, tender for her nephew, will at such a moment, blame my departure; but no, she saw it in its just and proper light, and her mind is not so weak as to be blown about by every gale."

Occupied with similar reflections, she headed nothing that she had passed, and she arrived the second night at Mrs. Moreland's, without one single event worthy of record.

That lady received her with cordial affection and lively pleasure; Fanny flew into her arms, and lost in the sweet renewal of a tender friendship, the painful

remembrance of her sad situation. The good Mary Curtis too, flew to her dear Miss Vincent, and regardless of rank or ceremony, hung about her neck in artless fondness. Mary was much attached to Mrs. Moreland, and doated on the children, but her affection for Miss Vincent was of a different nature; it had been the effect of an instant sympathy, and amounted to enthusiasm. Mary had seen her sad and in danger; she pitied and rescued her; and these formed in her sensible and affectionate heart, bonds never to be broken. Fanny returned her careffes with almost equal warmth, for the simplicity and native goodness of the injured girl, whose mind had remained uncorrupted, secured her the constant affection of the grateful Fanny.

The short remainder of the evening passed in pleasing and tender recollections; Mrs. Moreland's countenance bore

bore evident marks of content, which Fanny naturally attributed to Mr. Moreland's absence : and after passing the night in refreshing herself from her fatigue, the succeeding day was devoted to mutual confidence.

Mrs. Morland wept over Fanny's trials, allowed that she had acted nobly, but pitied Lord de Grey. The subject was inexhaustible ; but Fanny, who found it was necessary for her to seek some other topic for reflection, industriously gave her attention to other things, endeared herself to Mrs. Moreland's sweet children, sought in every thing employment, and where she could amusement, and in a few weeks succeeded at least in rendering her melancholy less apparent. She received one letter from Lady Margaret, describing the agonies of Lord de Grey, and his impatient acquiescence in the secret she
was

was determined to preserve of Fanny's place of abode, continuing to pay the most flattering tribute of praise to a conduct which really required not only her own, but the approbation of her friends, to take off the painful edge of its difficulty: Lady Margaret said, she desired her not to write, she should herself write no more; the part her excellent young friend had chosen, required uninterrupted fortitude, and deserved unshaken peace.

Fanny wept over this letter and more industriously than before, sought to banish all fatal remembrance from her mind, since it was easy to see, that interested as Lady Margaret was in the happiness of her nephew, she yet, at least, thought their separation necessary, and saw no prospect of any fortunate events to enable them to meet without blame.

She

She had now been two months at the cottage, when one morning, while Mrs. Moreland was employed upstairs, she was alarmed by a horseman on full gallop stopping and ringing furiously at the gate; Lord de Grey occurred to her mind instantly, and no sooner had the horseman alighted than he rushed into the parlour where she was; she turned round, expecting to behold Lord de Grey, but she saw a stranger.

“Miss Vincent, I presume;” she bowed, “Have you seen any body, Madam?”

“No Sir.”

“Thank God! I am then soon enough to prevent the shock I feared; a letter Madam.”

He put the letter into her hand, bowed, and retired.

To describe the feelings of Fanny at this abrupt declaration would be impossible; unknown horrors rushed on her mind,—Lord de Grey forgetting her, married to Miss Darnley, were among the slightest; she fancied him murdered, fallen a victim to the sword, or some fatal accident; she saw him bleeding, disfigured, speechless;—exertion and sense forsook her, and she sat like a statue, the unlooked at letter still in her hand; no salutary tear flowed from her eye, it was motionless; her face was pale as the inanimate corpse, and the convulsive heavings of her bosom alone shewed that she lived.

In this state, insensible to what passed around her, she was found by another stranger; Lord de Grey himself entered the room, and beheld the object of his dearest wishes in a state of torpid stupefaction, unconscious of his entrance.

He

He gazed at her a moment, and trembling left her reason was wholly overturned, turned aside, unable to look at her; she then sobbed; again he viewed her, flew to her, clasped her to his heart, called on her in the tenderest voice, addressed her by the fondest name, printed a fervent kiss on her cold, pallid lips, and finding all ineffectual, exclaimed aloud, "Miserable de Grey!"

"Is he dead?" said Fanny. "Tell me all; I can bear it, indeed I can!"

"Blessed Heaven, she speaks! Look at me, my own Fanny, I am your de Grey, come to claim you for my own, never more to be parted."

She gazed intently at him, and said, "I see you pity me; but I know he is murdered; why else did you come express?"

"Oh,"

“Oh, Fanny,” said he, “do you not know me indeed? Oh, sweetest, loveliest, can I bear this! Fanny, my adored, look at me! remember me! I am your own de Grey!”

His agonies called at length a flood of tears from her eyes; she wept violently and hysterically, but afterwards perfectly knew his Lordship; she gave way to the extremest joy at seeing Lord de Grey, gazed at him with evident pleasure, and cried repeatedly, “Thank God! Thank God!”

He was kneeling at her feet, and in extacy to find she knew him; and tho’ he still thought her mind disordered, passionately kissed her hand and wept.

She seemed now to recollect herself, and desired him to rise and be seated. “Why are you here, my Lord?” said she,

she, "and what does this letter mean? oh, that express!"

"What express, my love!" cried he.

"I know not," replied she, "he brought me this letter."

Lord de Grey took it; he saw it was from Lady Margaret, and instantly comprehended that his aunt having wished to apprise her of his intended visit, had alarmed her by the haste of her messenger; he explained this circumstance to Fanny, who then related to him the manner in which the man had entered; and Lord de Grey, who saw in the whole circumstance, her evident attachment to him, thanked her for her solicitude, in terms so passionate as recalled her recollection.

She

She would then have checked his ecstasy, but it was too late; he was all transport, and entreated her to read the letter which had so much alarmed her, but she would have declined it; Lord de Grey, however, knowing its purport, broke the seal, and unfolding it, put it into her hand, he then walked to the window, and Fanny, casting her eye over it, read as follows:

To Miss VINCENT.

“ I had resolved not to persecute you
“ in the retirement you had chosen with
“ so much prudence and fortitude, but
“ to suffer you, my charming young
“ friend, to recover that serenity in solitude which the conduct of the world
“ had deprived you of; but age and
“ judgment must yield to youth and
“ passion, and I can no longer support
“ the

“ the distraction and melancholy of my
“ nephew ; I have disclosed to him the
“ place of your abode ; he is at this in-
“ stant preparing to set off, I know not
“ if he is not even gone, but I send off
“ a courier to apprise you beforehand of
“ his arrival, and even to entreat you to
“ receive him favourably. My excel-
“ lent Miss Vincent, should he make
“ to you a proposal, from which at first
“ your delicacy may revolt, oh consider
“ it as sanctioned with my perfect ap-
“ probation ! I believe it to be the only
“ means of securing to either of you
“ that felicity you both so eminently
“ merit ; my nephew will fully explain ;
“ I am unwilling to detain my courier
“ any longer than to assure you of the
“ perfect friendship of,

“ Your truly devoted,

“ M. DE GREY.”

Fanny

Fanny read this letter with an emotion which was every moment encreasing, and which was not lessened when Lord de Grey turned suddenly round, and, throwing himself at her feet, exclaimed, passionately, "And will you not yield to our united entreaties, and become my wife? Oh, Miss Vincent, say but that you will! Speak, dearest angel!"

"This, my Lord," replied Fanny, with a faltering voice, "is a subject which requires much deliberation, sanctioned by Lady Margaret, I will not dismiss it lightly; I will consider it impartially, if indeed, in such a cause, I am capable of being an impartial judge, but I do not think it will meet my concurrence."

"Oh, do not say so, my adored love," cried he, "Why will you not rely on the
the

the unbiaſſed judgment of Lady Margaret?"

"I admire, I love, I revere Lady Margaret," replied Fanny, "but my Lord, in this caſe I would not implicitly rely on any one's judgment; my own heart, my own conſcience, muſt not reproach me; I muſt have their ſuffrages to every deliberative action."

Again he knelt, again he entreated.

"Be ſatiſfied, my Lord," ſaid ſhe, "I will not decide before to-morrow, but be aſſured you will not want a very powerful pleader."

He was all tranſport; he kiſſed her hand a thouſand times; and Fanny, gazing on him, inſtantly burſt into tears.

"I cannot bear to ſee you ſo delighted,
my

my Lord; alas! should my better judgment crush this transport—”

“Would you regret it, Fanny?” said he.

“Can you doubt it?”

How long they would have proceeded, and whether Lord de Grey would not have obtained a decisive and favourable answer, is uncertain, for they were interrupted by one of Mrs. Moreland's children, who came to tell Miss Vincent her mama was looking for her.

Fanny, who felt the interruption a seasonable one, replied, “that she would instantly wait on her,” and rising, desired Lord de Grey to accompany her to the drawing-room. Mrs. Moreland was everjoyed to see his Lordship; she
heard

heard with a pleasing surprise the events of the morning, and declared she was delighted to perceive an end to her dear Fanny's uneasiness.

“Oh, Madam!” cried Lord de Grey, “you will then be my advocate with Miss Vincent!”

“Indeed I will, my Lord, and you have only to wish her decision may be as favourable as I will endeavour to make it.”

A more general conversation now took place, in which, to be sure, Fanny, notwithstanding her endeavours to rouse herself, bore but a small part, and in the evening it naturally fell again upon the subject uppermost in their minds. Lord de Grey endeavoured to persuade her to give him then her decisive answer, but she resolutely persisted in deferring it

till the next day; "I is an important affair to us both, my Lord, and ought not to be rashly terminated."

It was very late before Lord de Grey could persuade himself to quit the cottage, and much later before Mrs Moreland and Fanny parted for the night. They revolved the question a thousand ways in their minds, started objections, resolved difficulties, but finally agreed in nothing but admiring Lord de Grey. Mrs. Moreland wondered Fanny could for a moment think of refusing him; was every thing a man should be; he was generous, spirited, and warm; he was delicate, tender, and affectionate; then he was so handsome, so elegant, so graceful; had so much the manners of fashion!"

"All this, my dear friend," replied Fanny, "I have long seen and admired;
this

this may direct my inclination, but in this case I must be ruled by conscience; if you please we will retire; in silence and solitude I will confer with my own heart, and you need not fear that Lord de Grey will want a zealous friend."

They embraced and separated, Fanny to a sleepless pillow, where she revolved the grand question which was to stamp the colour of her life; agitated and restless she lay, difficulties environed her on every side, and she knew not on what to decide; she longed for the morning, again to consult Mrs. Moreland, as the preceding evening she had longed for solitude, to commune with her own heart; she felt herself almost irresistibly led by her inclinations to accept of Lord de Grey, and such was her laudable diffidence, that the more she felt herself inclined to favour him, the more she feared some delusion from her heart to blind

her reason, and lead her judgment captive.

Mrs. Moreland found her in the morning, pale, feverish, and anxious.

“Here indeed is a hand,” said that kind friend, as she took the hot hand Fanny held out to her. “Is this fit to be given in marriage?”

“Alas, no!” said Fanny, “nor is this heart fit at all to decide on so important a point.”

“Why you cannot be still in doubt!” cried Mrs. Moreland.

“Oh!” said Fanny, “and when shall I be decided! My dear Mrs. Moreland, I have been studiously weighing every argument for and against this marriage, and am incapable of judging which scale really

really preponderates; hear me dispassionately, and assist me to chuse; first then, to begin with reason, it is to be clandestine, a measure which carries on the face of it an iniquitous mystery; why should we do any thing which requires concealment? and what sinister influence can teach the heart to adopt a conduct any circumstance prevents from being revealed; yet could I even resolve on this, consider me, my friend, from the moment of my birth, marked out as the outcast of the world, abandoned by my parents, who probably were ashamed to own me, as the offspring of vice, or unable to support me as the child of poverty; early taught the miseries of dependence, and in the first dawn of reason stigmatised by calumny, pursued by the same cruel obloquy, shall I carry into a noble family, a being of obscure, if not of infamous birth, branded with vice, and shunned by every delicate reputa-

tion, shall I expose the best of sons, the most amiable of men to the curses of his father? Shall I bring into the world children who shall reproach my husband for giving them such a mother? Shall I ever risque the cruel possibility that Lord de Grey himself should repent of this rash step, and, joining in all the feelings of his family, cease to love the miserable being who had made herself his wife? Oh, Mrs. Moreland, this is a picture I cannot bear!"

"You are too severe," interrupted Mrs. Moreland, "look on the other side."

"Alas!" resumed Fanny, "it is there I am partial! it is there that my fancy wantons in luxuriant happiness! When I imagine the mystery of my birth honourably done away, the clouds which shade my name vanished before the bright

bright sun of truth and innocence ; when I see Lord Calshot reconciled and kind, Lord de Grey ever as he is now ; myself loved and respected, my children dutiful and amiable—here I must not dwell ; here my too partial heart leads me into fairy scenes of fantastic happiness, too extatic to exist among mortals.”

Mrs. Moreland endeavoured to strengthen these last arguments, but she was interrupted by a more powerful pleader.

“ My dearest Fanny,” cried Lord de Grey, as he entered, “ dare I now ask for your decision ? ”

“ What will you say to the weak being before you,” replied Fanny, “ if she owns she is still undecided ? and while she doubts she will not act.”

“Nor would I have her,” replied Lord de Grey, “my Fanny’s choice must be as free, as unbiassed as my own; nor would I receive her hand while the least doubt lurked in her bosom; but what is it you doubt? is it the truth of my affection?”

“Alas no!” said she, “Did I doubt that my task were comparatively easy.”

“Tell me then,” said he, “do you think I would in any thing deceive you? do you fear my future character?”

“My Lord,” said Fanny, “that I hesitate at all, that I for a moment admit the idea of uniting myself clandestinely to any family in the world, is a strong proof of the confidence and love I feel for you; this is not a moment when any false delicacy should make me seek to hide either, for they only can excuse the present deliberation.”

Condescend then," said Lord de Grey, "to impart to me your fears, your doubts, and as I have already conquered my own, let me endeavour to dissipate your's."

"You then have had apprehensions?"

"This, my Fanny," replied he, "you well observed, is not a moment for either of us to have the shadow of a reserve with each other, why then should I seek to conceal from you that I have had my doubts, since they are all dispelled, and my whole soul is now bent to one dear object."

"I honour your candour, my Lord," said Mrs. Moreland, "it is infinitely more favourable to my friend than if your passion had imprudently blinded you to the evident objections to your marriage, that were indeed a delusion which time must have dissipated."

“ I feel it forcibly so,” replied Fanny, “ nor shall I hesitate to repeat to you the alarms that prevent me from deciding ; the fatal stigmas on my character, if they deter not you, who are convinced of their falsehood, ought they not to deter me from connecting myself with a noble family, till they are not merely disowned by their infamous fabricators, but till my innocence is acknowledged by the world. Lord de Grey’s wife ought not even to be suspected !”

“ True, my love,” cried he ; “ nor deem it vanity if I say, she never could be suspected ; my character is sufficiently well-known to be a strong security for the perfect goodness of her whom I should chuse.”

“ To those who know you, I grant it,” replied she ; “ but there are some beings so fond of calumny, so deeply prejudiced,

judiced, that no proof could eradicate their fixed suspicions; how could you bear the finger of scandal to point at your wife? The tongue of slander to revile her?"

"It never could happen," said he with energy; "Oh! Fanny, these calumnies were not universally known."

"But every one," interrupted she, "would rake them up with fury when their humble and obscure object became the wife of Lord 'de Grey; however, my Lord, who shall promise me, that the time will never come when you shall enter into the feelings of your family, and regret that you slighted the splendid prospects before you, the paths which led to honour, wealth and fame, and contented yourself with the unknown offspring at best of penury, perhaps of vice and infamy? Who shall secure me

against the moment when my watchful eye shall see your tenderness giving way to regret?"

"That will I," cried he warmly. "The consciousness of my own truth enables me to stand up my own hostage—Oh! Miss Vincent, you cannot imagine that motives of no real consequence will ever outweigh with me the real happiness of the heart; that feeling the most blessed of men in your society, in your love, the whole world could offer any thing to my mind which could teach me to know regret."

"Do you not believe me, my angel?" cried he, dropping on his knee. "Do you doubt the truth, the faithfulness, of a heart superior to deceit. Oh! Fanny, Fanny, if indeed you doubt me, our contest is ended; I would not—"

"My

“ My Lord,” cried she, “ your warmth is too flattering not to be believed ; I do believe it ; perhaps I have but trifled hitherto, to avoid coming to my strongest argument—Lord Calshot ; are you reconciled to your father ? ”

“ I am not indeed,” replied he, “ vainly have I sought it, my letters have been returned unopened, myself denied admittance.”

“ Oh, my Lord ! and knowing this, knowing your attachment to me is the cause of this anger, can you thus persist ? ”

“ My attachment to you is a secret to my father ; it was the rupture with Miss Darnly occasioned his anger, and he drove me from his presence with such fury, as to prevent my acknowledging, which I meant to have done, the true
state

state of my heart ; he cannot then forbid or disapprove what he is ignorant of."

" Alas, Alas !" said Fanny, " What reasoning ! Can you then, my Lord, sincerely say, that you believe, had you acknowledged your intention, your father would have sanctioned it by his approbation ?"

" Ah, Fanny !"

" What then, my Lord, are you to be guided by the paltry reasonings that influence common minds ? Does the soul of Lord de Grey know no higher argument ? Or, does he hide from himself the reality of his disobedience by the foolish plea of his father's ignorance ?"

" There are bounds to duty and to obedience, my Fanny, and it is the province of an independent spirit to see
and

and know how far they extend. The jurisdiction of a parent is not unlimited; and happiness it is even lawful to seek by innocent means."

"Say rather, Lord de Grey, that it is lawful to avoid misery; duty ought not to compel obedience to a tyrannic order, which ensures unhappiness; but duty ought certainly to prevent an action repugnant to the will of a parent; and tell me, my Lord, when you have prevailed, and made me your wife, will your heart be very easy under the weight of a father's curse?"

"Horrible image! but it cannot be; and suffer me, Fanny, to ask you in my turn, whether, if I were the sole master of my actions, you would thus plead against me?"

"By

“By naming Lord Calshot as my most powerful argument, did I not confess I should not.”

“Ah Fanny, and shall I then be forced to wish”—He walked about the room in evident disturbance; he occasionally stopped, looked at Fanny, who too well comprehended his meaning.

“Oh, horrible!” cried she at length. “No, my Lord, never shall the most dutiful of sons be constrained by me to so dreadful an idea—I will—” and again she hesitated.

“Oh, speak,” said he, “finish your sentence—that blessed I will—” and he threw himself on his knees before her, bathing her hands with his tears. Mrs. Moreland advanced, Fanny threw her arms

arms round her, and sobbed on her bosom.

“Fanny,” cried Lord de Grey, in a tremulous voice, “Fanny, if you still doubt, if you are reluctant, I will plead no more; let not my misery, great as it is, greater as it will be, constrain the beloved of my soul to an action her heart has no part in.”

“Cruel de Grey, had I listened only to my heart”—again they were silent; she felt his agitation as he rested his head on her knees; he trembled violently; he sobbed—argument was at an end; they were stopped by a horrible barrier which each dreaded to pass. At length Lord de Grey arose, pale and trembling, endeavoured to hide his tears, and said “Sacred be your doubts and your reluctance; oh! may your happiness be as unalterable—”

“Are

“Are you going, my Lord?” said Mrs. Moreland.

“Ought I to stay, Madam?” asked he—“Fanny, Miss Vincent, will you not say adieu?”

She lifted up her eyes bathed in tears; she beheld his pallid face imprinted with the strong lines of agony.

“Never, never, must you part,” said Mrs. Moreland; “no misery can equal it.”

“Fanny,” said Lord de Grey, “you began one blessed speech—Why, oh why—but I will not seek to influence your feelings; farewell, and since you think it right to part—at least bid me farewell.”

She

She attempted to rise, her trembling limbs would not support her, and she sunk into her chair; pale and gasping, she was near fainting, and Lord de Grey flew to her, and clasping her in his arms, bore her to the window, which he opened, supporting her on his bosom—Fondly he prest his lovely burthen to his heart; his tears fell fast on her face, as she lay almost insensible in his arms—She opened her eyes, she perceived her situation, and striving to rouse herself, without speaking, attempted to move—“No, never, never,” cried he, “never more will I part from you, till your own lips have confirmed my fate; if you command me to be miserable, I will quit you for ever, but Oh Fanny I entreat you do not command it.”

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of her bosom proved the strength of her feelings.

“Oh! Fanny, we were born for each other, let us not part; give me but a right to call you mine, and the whole of my future life shall be governed by your directions. Ah! my love, look forward to smiling years of future happiness which love only can bestow; here shall we then regard these precious trials as strong proofs of that mutual tenderness which so well merited to be crowned. Oh! Fanny, must we part?”

“I think not;” she murmured.

Lord de Grey pursued this infant advantage, and having proved to her the difficulty they would find in parting, she soon agreed to the necessity of their union.

Once.

Once decided in her own mind, more perhaps as to the necessity, than the propriety of the step she was about to take, she felt happy in being relieved from the torment of deliberation, and fought to make no delays.

Every thing was speedily adjusted, and the succeeding morning was destined, to unite them for ever.

C H A P. VII.

EARLY the succeeding morning Lord de Grey led his lovely bride to the church, and the indissoluble vow was taken, which for ever united their happiness or their misery. Lord de Grey was all manly joy and firmness; Fanny was all anxious timidity and tenderness; Mrs. Moreland's eyes were filled with tears of friendly transport as she supported her trembling friend, who even at this last moment seemed almost dubious of the step she had taken.

The ceremony over, they returned to Mrs. Moreland's charming habitation, where a short period was passed in every possible happiness; but Lord de Grey,
dreading

dreading lest too long an absence from London should occasion some suspicions, which might lead to a premature discovery, was obliged to shorten his stay. He earnestly entreated his fair bride to permit him to prepare an abode for her in the neighbourhood of town, where he might have it in his power to pay her more frequent visits; but she persisted in remaining with Mrs. Moreland till her season of danger was over, which was now shortly expected, and Lord de Grey was obliged to be satisfied with her promise, that after that she would be wholly at his disposal.

A few days after his departure Mrs. Moreland received letters from the West Indies, which informed her, that though the affairs of Mr. Cecil's estate were settled, further business had been offered to Mr. Moreland, which promising to be lucrative, he had accepted, and which
would

would probably protract his stay for some time ; he therefore desired, that as soon as she was able to travel, she would set out to come to him, observing that she must not make a long confinement, or she would lose the season of the departure of the ships.

Mrs. Moreland received this mandate with quiet resignation, and arranged every thing so as to be able to set out as soon as she was up again, at which time Lady de Grey was to remove into some habitation nearer London. She received letters of warm congratulation on her marriage, both from Lady Margaret and Lady Susan de Grey, who were the only persons of his family to whom Lord de Grey confided his secret.

In a short month after Mrs. Moreland had given birth to her fourth child, she set out from the cottage, accompanied
by

by Lady de Grey, all her children, and Mary Curtis, who was the only part of her household she proposed taking with her. Mr. Wigstead had arranged every thing for her in London previous to her arrival, and, on their reaching the metropolis, the two friends took an affectionate leave of each other, and separated, Mrs. Moreland to set off in two days on her unpleasant voyage, Fanny to go to the house the care of her kind Lord had prepared for her reception.

It was situated about seven miles from London, but though so near was extremely retired, and very distant from any town; a few scattered houses round scarcely merited the title of a village, but the country itself was peculiarly beautiful, and the place itself a little Paradise.

Fanny was still looking round her, admiring the taste which had decorated

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this

this fairy spot, and enjoying in her own mind the exquisite delight of being for ever united to the man she adored, and of feeling assured from his constant conduct to her, both before their marriage, and in his subsequent visits to Mrs. Moreland's, that his sentiments for her were no less tender, when his Lordship entered.

He gazed with delight on the graceful form of his Fanny, light and airy as the wood-nymph of the scene, elegant and dignified like its guardian goddess; enraptured he beheld her, and expressed with fervor the transport he felt. Fanny was charmed with his tenderness, and while he fondly clasped her in his arms, her tears, excited by his ardour, flowed fast from her lovely eyes, while her whole countenance beamed with the purest delight.

Her

Her little household was soon established, and Pearson, an elderly man, who had lived from childhood in Lord Calshot's family, and had been attached to Lord de Grey ever since his Lordship first went to college, was presented to her Ladyship as her house-steward.

Pearson was high in his master's confidence, and he deserved it, for he was faithful and intelligent; he had officiated as the bride's father at their wedding, and, charmed with his master's choice, ever after divided his attachment between his Lord and Lady.

Lord de Grey told Fanny that, earnest as he was in seeking a reconciliation with his father, though he had thought it quite right to make sure of what was so highly conducive to his own felicity, yet he wished to avoid giving new offence to Lord Calshot, by any discovery of his

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marriage;

marriage; he had not therefore taken this house for her in their real names, but had given her out as a widow of the name of Flowerdale, and had called himself her brother, and it was thus they were known in the neighbourhood.

Fanny, ever averse to mystery, could not in her heart approve of this stratagem, but not knowing what could now be done, and feeling indeed the necessity of keeping their secret for a time, she forbore to express her dislike to it, and consented to pass as Mrs. Flowerdale. None of her servants, except Pearson, knew her for any thing else, the deception therefore was not very difficult, for of Pearson's fidelity they were secure, and the neighbourhood, as they were none of them likely to become her visitors, were not capable of discerning the cheat. Lord de Grey was not to live wholly with her, but still keeping
his

his apartments in London, was to pay her very frequent visits, as became a fond brother.

Her little anxiety on account of the mystery soon wore off; she found herself treated with high respect in the village, and had nothing to apprehend from its inhabitants; at liberty now to enjoy and to return the tenderness of her husband, she tasted the height of that felicity she had once thought unattainable on earth, her days passed in inexpressible transports, she would sit still and unemployed, save in the contemplation of her situation, and she found the highest delight in the consciousness of her felicity; her vivacity, which her former mortifications had lessened, returned with added grace, but without impairing her delicate sensibility, and Lord de Grey found in his amiable bride, that happy transition from lively to tender, that charming

mixture of the gay and the touching graces, so often described, but so seldom found.

Time passed very rapidly in the unalloyed happiness they now enjoyed. A month had already elapsed in a state of felicity the whole world perhaps could not parallel, when one morning, as Fanny was walking by herself, on the lawn before her house, a gentleman on horseback approached, whom, while she gazed at in hopes of finding it Lord de Grey, she perceived to be Edmund Wigstead.

She coolly returned his easy salutation, and was not a little surprised to see him give his horse to Pearson, alight, and advance towards her.

He addressed her with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance, and concluding

cluding she had abandoned the name of Vincent, asked by what appellation he must now distinguish her.

“ Her name,” she said, “ was Flowerdale !”

He bowed, and congratulated her on a change, which had placed her in so apparently happy a situation, and pursued his old course of common-place gallantry for above an hour with such success, that Lady de Grey was heartily tired of her old acquaintance.

She had enquired after Mr. Wigstead and the whole family, but without hinting a wish to see any of them there, or the slightest invitation to himself to repeat his visits ; this forbearance on the part of his fair hosts, Edmund Wigstead well understood, and though he determined to say nothing to his family of the discovery

he had made, he resolved at the same moment to make it his own favourite airing.

He had always thought Fanny eminently lovely, but single women were not to his taste; an amour with married ladies was infinitely more suitable to his disposition, who had gleaned all the worst part of the Chesterfield system of morals, and while he overlooked the manly fortitude, the firm sweetness, so powerfully recommended in those various letters, he sought only to attain the easy smoothness, and fashionable turpitude too seducingly described in them; but Edmund Wigstead was not the being who could render himself amiable by such acquisitions, his spirit was too dastardly and servile, his politeness was too cringing, his complaisance too excessive; he could not stamp his awkward vices with that airy levity, that graceful playfulness, which

which renders them dangerous; he was incapable of becoming either a Lovelace or a Charles Surface, though he aimed at their pleasing dissipation.

With this man Fanny had been displeased since the first evening of their acquaintance; she saw him therefore depart with pleasure, and hoped that by her cautious forbearance of the least invitation, he would be prevented from repeating his unwelcome visits; she had still another reason for wishing to avoid seeing him, besides her dislike of the man; he was better acquainted with the world than her village neighbours, and from his former knowledge of her could more easily detect the fallacy of her situation; any detection would have been highly unwelcome to her, and she hoped that by her address she had delivered herself from this danger.

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From the cottage, as he passed towards the village, he recollected that Fanny had not mentioned Mr. Flowerdale, and as curiosity was a very prevalent motive in his weak mind, he determined to make some enquiries at the village; fortunately, in his way, his horse picked up a pebble, which led him naturally enough to stop at the farrier's, who occupied a small shed close to the alehouse of the village, distinguished by the name of the King's-head public-house.

The farrier discovered that the poor beast had lost a shoe, which produced another discovery, that the man must run some distance down the village, to fetch a few nails, his own being unluckily expended; as this would take some time, the courteous landlady, who was airing herself in the porch, invited Mr. Wigstead

Wigstead to take a seat in her house, which he accepting with a complaisance which passed current with Mrs. Lawson, she conducted him to a parlour, and enquired if his Honour had no further commands. "He was hungry," he said, and a cold round of beef, and a bottle of wine being produced, he invited his civil landlady to sit down, and eat a mouthful with him.

Charmed with the polite manners, and handsome person of her guest, Mrs. Lawson unlocked her stores of intelligence, and having run over the village events more immediately under her own eye, she proceeded to the fair resident at the cottage.

Now Edmund pricked up his ears, while Mrs. Lawson proceeded in her harangue.

“Poor thing! she’s a widow, and her name is Flowerdale, and a pretty creature she is, as ever I seed in my born days, but she’s sadly moped there, and never stirs out at all, nor sees no company at all, except one gentleman, her brother I thinks they says, and a sweet personable man he is, as ever I laid my eyes on, except indeed it be your Honour; (casting an approving look at the guest) She’s very pretty behaved, and speaks so civil and gently to every body, that I can’t help pitying her, ’cause she lives such a sad mopish life there.”

“A widow, is she?” said Wigstead, “and pray how long has she lived here?”

“Why not above a month,” resumed the landlady; “that same gentleman as I mentioned, her brother you know, came down about two months ago, and
took

took the cottage, for then indeed it was no better than a cottage, but he pranked it up so fine, and so smart, and transmogrified it so that a body would not have known it again, and he said it was for his sister, Madam Flowerdale, so about a month a'ter, his sister cumed, and she has lived here ever since, do ye see, and she arn't above eighteen or nineteen."

"She is very young to be a widow," cried Wigstead.

"Why yes, Sir, so I says; and to be out of mourning and-all; and so I says sometimes, as she should not take on so for the loss of one husband, 'cause why, she might get twenty a day if she would but shew herself."

"Out of mourning!" replied Wigstead, "then her husband must have been dead some time."

“He oft to have been dead a full year, for now your young widows has left off mourning for two years; but God forgive me, I do not think he can ha’ been dead so long, for I sometimes fancies as how she’s a breeding, but I never says nothing about it, for folks are so malicious that they would say I tould ’em Madam was no better than she should be, and whatever one’s thoughts be, it is good to know how to keep one’s tongue between one’s teeth.”

“What then, you have your thoughts?” asked he.

“Why, Sir, a body can’t help thinking you know, and to be sure ’tis very odd to see such a fine young lady come and shut herself up here, if so be as how she’s an honest woman; for as I says to myself sometimes, no honest woman, d’ye see, would be kept so moped up, no
not

not if she was a widow ten times over; and then no signs of mourning, and then to be sure she is big with child."

Edmund had now collected a charming store of materials for his reflections, and his horse being ready, he took a friendly leave of his loquacious landlady, who overwhelmed him with her civilities and compliments, and retook his way towards London. He revived in his mind all the old stories against Miss Vincent, and concluded that she was now actually in keeping, and therefore there could be no harm in seeking a share of her good graces.

Fanny distrusting no harm, remained in perfect security in the cottage, and unwilling to mention a visit, which might raise some anxiety for their secret in the bosom of her husband, or perhaps never thinking of Edmund Wigstead, when

when she saw Lord de Grey, she said not a word about it.

His Lordship's visits though frequent, were usually made in the dusk of the evening; he feared no consequences from a mystery he hoped in a short time to be able to clear decidedly away; secure that whenever he announced his charmer as Lady de Grey, scandal must hide its diminished head; while he sought to avoid any action that might lead to suspicion. It so happened, that twice within ten days he met Edmund Wigstead in the retired lane leading to the cottage, and in a few days after saw him actually coming out of the gates.

This circumstance joined to Fanny's total silence concerning him, filled him with anxious alarm, and scorning to force an explanation she seemed to wish to avoid, he forebore to mention Edmund

mund Wigstead, while she continued silent from the motives before described.

She felt so much repugnance to seeing him that she would have ordered Pearson to admit him no more, had she not feared to rouse as an enemy, a man so capable of detecting her mystery ; and of giving it a bad turn to the world ; she fondly hoped to ensure his silence by her civility, and the more she felt disgusted by his visits, the more unwilling she was to speak of them to Lord de Grey, least he should take some violent means to rid her of them.

About this time Lord de Grey was much engaged by the marriage of his two sisters ; and Fanny saw him rather seldom. Lady Haughtonbury indeed did not take up much of his time, but Lady Susan, who had been constantly his warmest friend, was gratified by her brother's

brother's kind attention; her earliest care after her marriage was to visit Fanny, whom she had ever loved with the warmest affection; their meeting was sincere and friendly; they expressed their mutual gladness with an ardour which did honour to them both; and Lady Margaret who had paid her new niece several friendly visits, did not neglect to see her on this occasion. Lady de Grey regretted that she should love both these dear friends, as Lady Margaret accompanied Mr. Cecil and Lady Susan to their seat in the north, and on the whole this congratulatory farewell visit left her more melancholy than rejoiced.

Lord and Lady Calshot still remained in town on account of Lord Calshot's health, which required the constant attendance of his physicians; and Lord de Grey in vain sought a reconciliation with his father.

Fanny

Fanny welcomed him with unusual tenderness, the evening after Lady Susan and Lady Margaret's visit; he was silent and reserved, but she ascribed it to his grief at parting from his favourite sister, and forbore to interrupt his melancholy; she herself was low spirited, but endeavoured to restrain it in his presence, and sought not to detain him the succeeding day, as she hoped, when next they met, they should neither of them stand in need of consolation.

As she expected him the following evening, she endeavoured to call up all her pleasing graces, adorned her house with flowers, and gave every thing a smiling appearance. Lord de Grey, who was restless and anxious in town, set out rather earlier than common for the cottage, and when about two miles from it, was overtaken by the same man who had occasioned his perturbation.

The

The same cruel sensations recurred, and seeing Edmund Wigstead, who was pleased with his Lordship's air, wished to enter into conversation with him, the horrid suggestions within him determined him to accede to the wishes of the stranger.

Edmund Wigstead had not been at home, when Lord de Grey called in Laurence Poutney Lane to learn the character of Fanny Vincent; he was a personal stranger to his Lordship, and having set down Lord Montraville in his own mind as the keeper of Fanny, it never occurred to him that this was the personable gentleman meant by Mrs. Lawson.

Common subjects were instantly discussed, and Lord de Grey having said he was going to sleep at a friend's house about five miles off, Wigstead exclaimed, "I wish I was to sleep where I am going!" "How

“How so?” said Lord de Grey.

“Faith,” replied Edmund, “I am going to see a very pretty woman, and though I know she is com-atable, I cannot get quite so far yet; but I trust it won’t be long first.”

“Who is she?” asked his tortured companion.

“Why, if you go this road often,” said Wigstead, “you must have remarked a little ornamented cottage about a mile and a half further on?”

“I know it very well, it is covered with jessamine.”

“The same; well, there lives my charmer; her history is rather curious, but I am pretty well acquainted with it from indisputable authority.”

“Pray

"Pray is it a secret?" enquired Lord de Grey.

"Oh Lord, no!" returned his new friend; "I'll tell it you in short. When she was very young she was taken into keeping by a baronet, who brought her up for that purpose; but she ran away from him to a young friend of his, one colonel Gordon, who soon grew tired of her, turned her off, and sent her to London; here she imposed herself on a respectable family in the city as a person of honor and character, and she was received as governess to their daughters. Here it was I first saw her; this quiet life however soon tired my young Madam, and she went to live with a noble abbess at the west end of the town, where she passed through successive hands, and at last is kept by a man of rank and fashion in that cottage; but names you will excuse my mentioning. I have visited her here
fre-

frequently, and between you and I, am not very ill received. I am fond myself of the precursors to an amorous intrigue, or if I wished it, I dare say I might shorten the way to be made happy to night."

Lord de Grey, unable to support the torture any longer, looked at his watch, and said, he should alarm his relation, therefore pushed his horse into a quicker pace, and concealed himself in a thicket from whence he could discern all that passed at the cottage. He saw Wigstead arrive, saw him enter, saw him at an upper window in conversation with Fanny, and suffered more than torture.

After an hour spent in the most poignant misery, he beheld his hated rival quit the house, and soon after joining him, said, he had found his friend indisposed, and was therefore returning to town;

town; then carelessly enquired after his success.

"Why, faith," said Wigstead, "I believe I might have been the happiest of men this very night, had she not expected her keeper; she seemed prepared to see somebody, and indeed, though we talk of those matters with a delicate reserve, she gave me to understand as much."

"Hell and furies!" exclaimed Lord de Grey; "my cursed horse made such a trip as had like to have thrown me."

"Indeed," pursued Wigstead, "the kind creature hardly seeks now to conceal her inclination for me; I foresee I shall be sickened with her fondness."

"This jade," cried Lord de Grey, "has overgone her strength to day, and
it

if I don't gallop to town, she will throw me, it's an old trick of hers."

With these words, Lord de Grey wished his companion a good night, and pushing his horse into a gallop, hastened to his apartments in London.

Fanny, meanwhile, who had all the evening been expecting Lord de Grey, had been cruelly disappointed when she beheld Edmund Wigstead. She had barely treated him with civility, and had received all his gallantry with an impatient coldness, which she scarcely sought to restrain; every moment, in hopes of being interrupted by her husband, she was anxiously looking out of the window, little imagining that deluded husband had been listening to tales, which though Edmund loved to embellish, his self-love taught him to believe at least half true.

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When her wearisome companion was gone, Lady de Grey seated herself at the open window, where she eagerly sought to distinguish the form of her Lord in the passengers who caught her eye; she looked in vain; he arrived not, and long after the peaceful villagers had retired to rest, and the whole hamlet was lost in silence, the anxious wife remained at the window, cautiously listening to every distant sound that died upon the gale; and the true cause of her Lord's detention never entering her pure and innocent heart, she wrought herself up almost to a state of frenzy in thinking over all the various accidents that might have befallen him,

The village clock struck two; she thought she heard a horseman winding along the road, he advanced, it was clearly the sound of a horse in full gallop; she plainly heard his steps every moment
more

more and more distinct; hope and fear contended in her bosom—she dreaded, she wished his arrival—he came in sight—it was not Lord de Grey—he surely brought some dreadful tidings—she hung half out of the window to catch his message, and beheld the object of her solicitude, after viewing the cottage, pursue his way with the same unaltered speed. She continued gazing and listening long after his horse's last faint steps had vanished from her ear.

The grey clouds in the horizon began to be streaked with red; she longed ardently for day, determining to send the faithful white-headed Pearson to enquire after his master. Day appeared, and she resolved in one hour to rouse the honest domestic, but in less time than that, she heard another horse; again she ardently strained her eyes to discern what she so much wished to see, and in a few

moments actually beheld Lord de Grey through the winding of the trees.

Ever considerate, Lady de Grey forbore to call up the venerable Pearson, she ran herself to the door, and waiting in the hall to receive him, stood in breathless expectation, while he himself turned his horse into the stable.

When he approached the house, he was surprised to find the door open, he entered precipitately, and in an instant, Fanny rushing into his arms, exclaimed, "God be praised!" and fainted away.

This singular reception, evidently the effect of terror and affection, called forth all Lord de Grey's tenderness; he carried her up stairs in his arms, and laying her, still insensible on the bed, while he gazed on her pallid countenance, he swore never to admit another thought to her dishonour. Suc-

Succoured by her husband's gentle cares, Lady de Grey at length opened her eyes, and giving way to the fulness of her heart, described her alarms and anxiety through the night, with such feeling and tenderness, intermingling her recital with joyful tears, and playful caresses, that Lord de Grey gazed on her sweetly varying countenance with transport, and while he read in it the fond emotions of her heart, reproached himself for having ever suspected her.

Twenty times he was upon the point of confessing to her his guilty suspicions, and giving her the true reason of his absence; but again he reflected, that by so doing, he should only check the innocent freedom of her manners, and plant a thorn in her bosom which time might fail ever to destroy—might she not fear the demon of jealousy, once raised, might never be quelled; and as

he now felt it was for ever banished from his mind, why should he give her the knowledge of an evil, which unknown she would neither feel nor fear? He therefore only told her some plausible reason for his stay, and in her transports at his safe return, she dived not into his excuses.

An appointment in the evening with a friend of Lord Calshot's, who meant to mediate between the incensed father and the afflicted son, obliged Lord de Grey to quit the cottage; but what were his feelings when he met in the lane, that basilisk to his sight, the presuming, the slanderous Wigstead. With pain he returned the salutation of his new acquaintance, and heard with agony that he was again going to the cottage; he hoped to be more fortunate to-night he said. Lord de Grey wished him success, touched his hat coolly, and they parted;

parted ; but an appointment with his father himself would then have been neglected ; he returned through a bye path to the thicket where he had before concealed himself, and from which he again beheld the detested Wigstead enter the cottage.

Fanny, persecuted by a man she disliked, would long ago have forbidden his visits, had she not feared to irritate him as an enemy, and received him every time with encreasing disgust ; she thought he staid unufally long this evening ; and as he was more than commonly free in his conversation, and pointed in his compliments, she determined to brave the consequences, and order Pearson to admit him no more.

But scarcely was he out of sight, ere the door opened, and she was surprised

at the re-entrance of Lord de Grey. Astonished, alarmed, she asked if he was not well, that he was returned so soon. He should not go to town, he said, that night; but did not condescend to give her any reason for his altered purpose.

His reflections as he lay concealed in the thicket were not of the most pleasant nature; such a confirmation of his former fears, could not but renew his late suspicions; and having once settled in his mind that Edmund Wigstead was a favoured rival, he could turn and twist her most innocent tenderness into damned art, and every circumstance into horrible certainty. Prepossessed with this idea, he beheld his lovely wife with the jaundiced eye of jealousy, and determining to put an end to his suspense, returned to the cottage, totally forgetting his appointment in town.

Fanny

Fanny beheld with agonising surprise the dreadful change in Lord de Grey; he had left her an hour before, tender, affectionate, cheerful; he returned gloomy, unkind, almost ferocious; she had never before remarked so dreadful an inequality in his temper, and dreading lest some horrible event had taken place, with respect to his father, she dared not enquire, lest he should curse her as the cause of all his anguish.

Tormented with these distressing reflections, she neither ventured to speak to him, or even look at him; her bosom throbbed almost to bursting, but he took no notice of her; after half an hour spent in gloomy silence, he rung, and ordered Pearson to take candles for him into the library, and not call him to supper, for he did not choose to be disturbed.

Aghast at this uncommon order, Fanny's tears swelled to her eyes, but fearing to enrage him, she restrained them from falling. He rose, and without seeming to notice her left the room.

Lady de Grey no longer strove to conceal or restrain her emotions, her tears flowed violently, and as she leant her head on her two hands, she sobbed with agony; dreadful indeed, she thought must be the misfortune that could so totally change her Lord; she feared to know the horrible truth.

Lost in these reflections, she heard not the entrance of Pearson; he brought her lights, shut up the windows, let down the curtains, industriously set the room to rights, and made a hundred efforts to attract the attention of his mistress, and when no possible business occurred, which could protract his stay, with a
voice

voice and countenance suited to the mournful appearance of his lady, he tremblingly said, "Madam! my Lady de Grey!"

She scarcely raised her head from her clasped hands, and said, "Well, Pearson!"

"God forgive me, Madam, and do you pardon my boldness, but I fear your Ladyship is not well!"

"Yes, yes, good Pearson, I am—No, not quite well.

"Ah, my Lady! will you forgive me if I speak right out? Indeed, indeed, I love your Ladyship as well as I do my young Lord, and sure if he was my own child I could not love him better—but I fear, Madam, you'll be angry with me."

“On the contrary, Pearson, I am indebted to your honest affection.”

“Ah, my Lady! you may believe me, when I had the honour to be your Ladyship’s father at the church, on the wedding-day, I felt to love you both as my own children; God Almighty make you both happy again in each other! Oh, Madam, if I dared, I could tell you what’s the matter with my Lord!”

“What, Pearson?”

“Oh, my dear good Lady, some devil has put it in his head, for it was never in his noble nature, and I am sure he has no reason, I’d answer that with my life—”

“What can you mean, Pearson?”

The

The poor man hesitatingly replied,—
“God forgive him, but he’s jealous, and
that’s the truth on’t.”

Poor Lady de Grey, shocked at this
dreadful explanation, which though so
new to her unsuspicious mind, struck
conviction home to her heart, raised her
full eyes to heaven, and heaved a deep
groan.

Pearson looked at her with respectful
compassion, “Oh, my Lady, I could
hardly bear to tell you this, but I thought
you would know how to set my master
right.”

“I thank you, Pearson,” she replied,
“I hope I shall;” and the worthy fel-
low, sobbing, left the room.

Lady de Grey, left to her own painful
reflections, though she knew not how
such

such a suspicion could have arisen in her Lord's mind, yet felt that this alone could account with any degree of probability, for the uncommon change in his character; she had before seen him sad, afflicted, alarmed, but when had she beheld the sadness her caresses could not soothe?—the affliction her tenderness could not subdue?—or the alarms her reasoning could not allay, or her smiles overpower? Now she felt awed from the attempt by the loneliness of his grief, and plainly saw, the more she reflected, that Pearson was in the right.

It was dreadful; yet was it not less horrible than a dying father's curse? At least she trusted it was a remediable evil; and she had so long brooded over forms of horror of another shape, that the change of her fears seemed a relief to her mind; she knew her husband's nature was indeed noble, and was it then possible

possible he should remain long tinged with that meanest vice of pitiful souls? A great mind must ever disdain suspicion: perfect confidence, or total separation, must, she felt, be the issue of the conflict, and, unable to bear the latter idea, she pictured to herself the smile of returning love, the tear of reconciliation, the total banishment of every doubt, and the undisturbed tranquility of their future lives.

Sometimes, her hope less lively, she reproached herself for having given way to his entreaties, and accepted clandestinely of his hand; she who had already been so cruelly wounded by the darts of calumny, ought she to have imagined that the voice of slander would now spare her? or that her Lord would be unmoved by it? Had he not formerly credited the tales he had heard? and
now

now that it was so much more his interest they should not be true, would not his fears be more alive? and might not his former suspicions recur to his mind? Ah, but did he not now know her heart to the bottom? ought not his so perfect knowledge to have given him equal confidence in her? She bewildered herself in her reflections, till she was certain of nothing but that he was jealous.

At length, wearied of endless and fruitless meditation, she sat in stupid in-ertion, tears and sighs being all the marks she gave of life; the tears dropped slowly from her eyes unnoticed, and sometimes she would wring her hands, or cast her supplicating eyes to heaven.

Near two hours had elapsed in this melancholy condition, when the faithful Pearson re-entered the room.

“ Alas ! ”

“Alas! alas!” said the good creature, “what a sight is here!”—He beheld his mistress on her knees on the floor, her face hid in the chair where she had been sitting, and her frame almost bursting with convulsive sobs.

“Has any thing happened, Pearson?” said she.

“Oh, Madam! I grieve to tell you, “my master has ordered another apartment, and sent us all to bed.”

“Is he writing?”

“No, Madam.”

“I thank you for your attention, Pearson,” replied she, without lifting her head from the chair. “Go to bed, good man, and let all the rest go to bed, I shall want nothing.”

Pearson,

Pearson, who respected her affliction, put up a silent prayer to God, to restore her peace of mind, and was leaving the room, when she rose and said, "Pearson, do any of the other servants suspect what has happened?"

"No, Madam;" said Pearson, "for I have obeyed all my master's orders by myself, that nobody might know anything of the matter."

"Good creature! cried she, "keep still your secret, and I trust your fidelity will be rewarded by our reconciliation."

"God send it may, Madam!—God above bless and preserve you!" And bowing he retired.

When the house was silent, and Fanny concluded no creature was up save her husband, she determined, by going to him,

him, to put an end to her suspense, and one way or other finish the horrible torment she endured; she tried to form in her mind some mode of addressing him, but it was impossible; she knew not whether she should find him furious or calm, enraged or sorrowful, but concluding, that whatever might ensue, could not be so dreadful as the agitation and suspense she now suffered, she rose, and softly opening the door, went down stairs with a slow and trembling step; her heart beat violently, her knees almost refused to support her weight; she approached the library door; she heard Lord de Grey walking backwards and forwards with a hurried step; she heard him once exclaim, in a tremulous tone, "My God! My God!" She laid her hand on the lock of the door; she had scarcely strength to turn it; she opened it at last, and Lord de Grey, casting his eyes

eyes that way, beheld the object of his agonizing reflections, pale, trembling, disordered, hanging by the door, and unable to proceed.

“Why are you not in bed, Fanny?” said he.

“What may all this mean, my Lord?” asked she, in the tenderest voice. “Have you griefs, and shall not I share them?”

She advanced towards him; he seemed irresolute how to receive her, but made no effort to stop her; she approached him quite close, and sinking down on the ground before him, laid her head on his knee, and wept violently.

“Why,” said he, without raising her, “why is this sorrow? Why are you thus disturbed?”

“Are

“Are not you disturbed?” replied she, looking in his face with a glance of eager enquiry.

“Disturbed!” no, no, no. I am not quite well, that’s all. Go to bed, Fanny. I shall be better, to-morrow.”

“To bed, my Lord! Oh, no! Are you unwell, and shall not I be your nurse? Are you sad, and shall not I share your sorrow? Don’t think I will go to bed.”

She still remained sobbing at his knee, nor did he attempt to remove her; he was silent.

“Lord-de Grey,” she continued, “you little know your wife, if you think——” she stopped, she rose, she cast her eyes upon him with a mournful expression; she could not proceed.

“If

“ If I think what ? ” enquired he.

“ That she can bear you should thus churlishly hide your griefs from her ; tell me all my Lord ; have not I a right to ask ? ”

“ Have you a right to ask ? ” demanded he solemnly.

“ I have ; ” said she, perfectly comprehending his meaning ; “ I have the fullest right. Oh, Lord de Grey ! ”

Again her tears choaked her utterance. He held out his hand to her ; she frankly gave him her's, he rose, and gazing earnestly in her face, the tears started into his eyes ; he let go her hand, and walked again about the room ; his arms were folded, and his eyes cast on the ground.

Fanny

Fanny beheld the conflict in his bosom, and running to him, threw herself across his way, and said, "End this dreadful suspense, any horrible certainty is better."

"It is," said he, "and I will bear the suspense no longer."

"Why should you?" said she, "I shrink not from the trial; behold me, Lord de Grey, I know your thoughts, you cannot conceal your fears from your wife; she sees, she knows the truth, yet dreads not to meet your eye."

Still he gazed on her, but seemed not disposed to interrupt her; she assumed more firmness, and continued:

"Oh, my Lord! and are my horrible predictions confirmed? Has the voice of slander again—but it is my cruel fate

fate pursues me ! I foresaw it, wretch that I am ! This will not do ; Lord de Grey, I cannot bear—I have not merited—oh, Lord de Grey, either give me back your confidence, or spurn me from you for ever ; there is no alternative, for I would not live to be the object of your suspicion ; knowing myself free from stain, I must be acknowledged so, or we must part ; forgive my firmness, but neither you nor I shall be slaves to a jealous humour, which the breath of scandal can give birth to, and which neither seeks nor needs any confirmation.

Her countenance grew more composed as she spoke, the angel of innocence lightened in her eye, and Lord de Grey's gaze grew into admiration.

“ Tell me, my Lord,” continued she, extending her white hand in the attitude of
of

of supplication, "tell me the reasons of your suspicions, and be assured I can do them all away."

"Never, never more be they remembered," cried he, extending his arms to receive her.

But Fanny drew back; "Oh, my Lord! I must be cleared, not pardoned; these fears must be demonstrated unfounded, not banished in a moment of tenderness; else may the infant who will soon claim your name and protection, be branded like its mother with dishonour."

"Oh, Fanny, Fanny," exclaimed Lord de Grey, "believe me, you are cleared; you are indeed an angel! refuse not to receive your penitent husband! I reproach myself for the past, do not you too reproach me!"

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K

"Oh,

"Oh, never, never!" cried Fanny, sinking in the arms of her husband; "blessed be the moment when I recover the full confidence of my Lord."

Long time he folded his lovely wife in his arms, kissed off her flowing tears, and pressed her to his beating bosom. then leading her to the sofa, he gently drew her on his knee, while mutual tears of tenderness spoke the rapture of their hearts.

Lady de Grey, though she yielded to the reconciliation without further explanation, determined to have every thing cleared up, and said, when they were a little more composed, "Now, my Lord, I may consult you on my difficulties; I have been sadly persecuted of late; but promise me one thing.—may promise," said she, perceiving he waited to hear her request.

"I do

"I do promise all you ask," said he, sealing his promise with a tender kiss. "What do you desire?"

"That you will acquiesce in my mode of putting an end to my difficulties, and seek no further revenge; the fact is, Mr. Edmund Wigstead, son to my good and benevolent friend, has found me out, and I fancy thought my appearance suspicious, for he has persecuted me with violent love and frequent visits; I feared to refuse his visits, lest he should become my enemy, and by detecting our secret, occasion a premature discovery."

Lord de Grey, who penetrated into her motives for this account, was charmed with her, and seeing truth and innocence in all her words and actions, recounted to her the full history of what had passed between Edmund and him-

self, blaming himself severely for ever giving credit to the assertions of such a puppy, but threatening to chastise him for his insolent slanders.

Fanny trembled for her Lord; again she entreated him to neglect the villain, saying, "that whenever the moment came when mystery should no more be necessary, every thing would be done away, and Edmund Wigstead would see the extent of his misapprehension;" but Lord de Grey was so enraged against him for his impudent villainy, that he was deaf to her entreaties, and determined to punish him as he deserved, and probably would have sought him for that purpose, had not other events occurred, which banished the remembrance from his heart.

They continued still in the library, when Pearson, who was deeply interested in

in the happiness of his Lord and Lady, came in himself, to let in the early sun; he would not suffer any of the domestics to be before-hand with him, and when he entered and saw Lord de Grey and his lovely consort sitting in perfect harmony, the old man was so affected that he exclaimed, "Blessed be God!"

Lord de Grey, who wished to conceal from the family that any thing unusual had occurred, persuaded Fanny to retire for an hour or two, at least till the general breakfast hour.

Two days passed at the cottage in the perfect enjoyment of unalloyed felicity; open confidence succeeded to dark suspicion, and Lord de Grey felt so happy in the explanation of his doubts, that he determined to banish them for ever, and never more to suffer the slightest

cloud to shade the sun-shine of their felicity.

On the evening of the third day, as Lord and Lady de Grey were returning from a delightful ramble among the retired woods in their neighbourhood, they were met by Pearson, with an anxious countenance, and a note in his hand.

"My Lord," said the faithful domestic, "Lord Adam Gowerland has been here."

"Has he indeed!" said Lord de Grey, "What passed between you, Pearson?"

"My Lord I was standing at the gate when he arrived; he seemed in search of something, for he eyed the cottage with great

great curiosity; his Lordship immediately perceived me; indeed, I believe, a motion I made to retire caught his eye; when I found he saw me, for he stopped, I bowed, and he said, "So, Pearson, you are here; then I find I have not been misinformed; where is your Lord?"

"My Lord, Sir!" said I.

"Nay," continued he, "you need not hesitate; I am just come from his lodgings in town, where I learnt he was in the country, and where should he be but where his servant is? I am told, Pearson," said he, "your Lord is married; do contradict it if you can; I was making his peace with his father, but if he is really married I wash my hands of him. Do, Pearson, say the lady who is with him is only his mistress."—"Indeed, my Lord," replied I, "I will

say no such thing; the lady is indeed his true and honourable wife, and if ever beauty and goodness deserved rank and fortune, Lady de Grey deserves it richly."

"Well said, Pearson!" cried Lord de Grey, "I commend your spirit, but go on."

"Lord Adam shook his head; my Lord!" resumed the old man. "A bad job this, Pearson," said he, "but get me pen ink and paper."

"Sir," said I, "my Lord will soon be at home, if you'd please to alight and wait for him."—"No," said he, "I have not time; I must keep my appointments, though he breaks his; I am engaged to see Lord Calshot this evening."—"And so, my Lord, when he had written this note he went away."

Lord

Lord de Grey took the note, and read as follows:

“ To LORD DE GREY.

“ If you are really married, de Grey,
“ I renounce you; I can no longer plead
“ the cause of a man who has disgraced
“ his family by allying himself to an im-
“ pudent impostress. For shame! for
“ shame! be not married; let me hear
“ you have only taken the gipsy into
“ keeping; or if you have really been
“ such a fool, stop her mouth with a
“ few hundreds, and be a free man
“ again. But Pearson tells me you are
“ over head and ears in love with this
“ nonpareil; if this be so, the case is
“ hopeless, and from hence I am going
“ to Lord Calshot's, to tell him what a
“ foolish part you have played. If she
“ is but your mistress, you shall still find
“ a friend in

“ ADAM GOWERLAND.”

K 5

“ Ah,

"Ah, my Lord," said Fanny, "am I destined to be ever your disgrace?"

"No, my angel," replied he, "my honour and my pride; but, Pearson, make haste and saddle my horse, I will fly instantly to Lord Calshot's, and endeavour, if possible, to gain his pardon; but if I am unsuccessful, if my father is inexorable, still will I glory in my marriage, I will teach them all to revere my Fanny's virtues."

Fanny leant weeping on her Lord. "My dear Lord," said she, "rather go first in search of Lord Adam; he may be gone home first, and you may yet persuade him to silence; he may not be determined to tell your father."

"Fanny," replied Lord de Grey "I will temporize no longer; this mystery is hateful to my soul; I have done nothing

thing I need to be ashamed of, and neither you nor I shall longer labour under the possibility of misconstruction; you shall from this moment be acknowledged my wife in the face of the world, and my father shall be the first person made acquainted with our marriage."

"Yet, my dearest Lord, let me entreat you to seek first Lord Adam; he has been your friend; that he is now my enemy proceeds from his warm wishes for your welfare; you may possibly gain an advocate, or at least silence a railer, by seeking him first."

"I will obey you, my Fanny, though I despise, and for ever renounce the friendship of the man who could give me such illiberal counsel; nor would I accept his mediation, for it must be founded on some mean, fallacious argument; I will go boldly into the presence

of my father, I will not be with-held ; I will plead my own cause with the energy of truth and virtue."

Pearson came to tell his Lord the horse was ready, and he parted from his Fanny, laden with her prayers for his success.

Lord Adam Gowerland had a house about five miles from the cottage, whither he first bent his course, but there he learned that Lord Adam had not been there since morning, and was not expected for two days. From hence Lord de Grey turned his steps towards a villa a few miles distant, which Lord and Lady Calshot had taken for the benefit of the country air, and to avoid removing far from medical assistance, as his Lordship's health was still in a very precarious state ; but when he arrived there,

there, he was told the whole family were in London.

He was now fifteen miles from London, the road to which he instantly took ; the day closed in very fast, and he could scarce distinguish objects, when he was alarmed by the sudden stopping of a coach, and a female voice, which he immediately recognized for Lady Calshot's, calling out for help.

Lord de Grey galloped up to the coach, and while the servants were dispatched various ways for assistance, he ordered the coachman to drive up to the door of a neat white house that stood by the roadside ; he gave a gentle knock, and asking to speak to the master or mistress of the house, the servant led him to a small parlour where an elderly lady was sitting alone.

He

He apologized for his intrusion with the easy elegance peculiar to himself, and briefly explaining its motives, was desired by the lady to consider himself as master of all her ability to serve him. Lord Calshot was instantly lifted out of the coach, and carried up by his son and two servants to a bed-room, where Lord de Grey himself undressed him, breathless with terror, lest his father should die while in anger with him.

By the time the Earl, still insensible, was laid in bed, Lady Calshot, whom the kindness of her hostess had prevailed upon to take a glass of hartshorn and water, entered the room, and now for the first time recognized her son; he threw himself at her feet, but affecting as was the moment of their meeting, she refused to speak to him, and turned from him with sullen disdain.

The

The surgeon of the place now arrived, and declared it necessary to bleed the Earl. While the operation was performing, Lord de Grey, kneeling by the side of the bed, held his father's other hand between his own, pressing it alternately to his lips and his heart. While the blood was flowing, Lord Calshot opened his eyes, and perceived by whom he was attended; a faint smile overspread his pallid countenance as he perceived his son, and his lips feebly articulated, "My son!"

Lord de Grey heard the welcome sounds with transport, the manly tear started into his eye, and he again kissed his father's hand.

Lord de Grey was a dutiful son; he loved his parents, and from infancy had always dreaded offending them; not from the fear of punishment, but because he was
ill

ill at ease when at variance with those he loved, or when transgressing a known duty. No base motive now influenced his conduct; Lord Calshot's anger or forgiveness could make no difference in his future prospects. The estate was entailed to the title, and he had even determined, be his father's will what it might, to relinquish all personals in favour of his sisters; but his soul was far above the influence of interested motives. His heart was tender, though firm, and though he scrupled not to secure his own happiness by actions morally good, he was uneasy under the pressure of a father's displeasure.

He was about to express the delight he felt at being noticed without unkindness by his father, when the servant, who had been sent for the physician, arrived, attended also by one of the first surgeons. They approved of the bleeding, and pre-

prescribed perfect quiet; they even insisted on Lady Calshot and Lord de Grey quitting the room, and spoke rather hopefully of the earl's recovery.

Lord de Grey offered to lead his mother down stairs, but she refused his hand, and hastened down rather sullenly to the parlour. On the stairs they met their kind hostess, whom motives of delicacy had kept out of the way, and who expressed the sincerest joy at hearing so flattering an account of his Lordship.

She attended them to the parlour, and Lord de Grey paid her his thanks with a graceful earnestness, and begged to know to whom his family were indebted for such singular humanity.

"Her name she said was Leroy; but she could not imagine her conduct could be

be singular, as there could not exist a being who could refuse assistance on such an occasion."

"I fear Madam," said Lord de Grey, "you think too favourably of the world."
"And yet," replied she, "I have no reason, for I have suffered from it."

These words interested Lord de Grey for his hostess; he examined her attentively; she was tall and thin, rather past the middle age, her countenance was pleasing, and her manners rather elegant; every thing around her was neat and tasteful, her own person being delicately clean, and modestly, though elegantly, attired.

Lord de Grey, who perceived how adverse his mother was to his wishes, willingly entered into conversation with Mrs. Leroy, and found her sensible and placid, though rather melancholy than lively.

While

While they sat chatting, Lord de Grey was agreeably surprised by the arrival of Mr. Cecil and Lady Susan, accompanied by Lady Margaret, whom he had thought gone all together into the country some days before; he knew they had been detained some time after their visit to the cottage; but was ignorant that they were yet in London. They were all three out of favour with Lord and Lady Calshot, for having in a manner countenanced Lord de Grey, and were still more astonished than his Lordship to find him attending on his father and mother.

They embraced him with great affection, and were introduced to Mrs. Leroy, with whom they were much pleased. Lady Calshot's mind was so far softened by the sad accident, that she cordially forgave Lady Susan and Cecil, and received

ceived Lady Margaret with civility, though as she had never liked that Lady, she could go no farther; but to her son she was still inexorable. He, feeling himself strengthened by the arrival of his friends, passionately besought his mother's favour, or at least that she would lend a patient hearing to his history.

"But," exclaimed she, "are you not married to Miss Vincent?"

"Gracious God!" softly sighed, Mrs. Leroy.

"I am, madam," replied he, but allow me to trace from the beginning all the circumstances which concurred first to lead me to address Miss Darnley, and then to detach me from her, while my heart had long been wholly in the possession of Miss Vincent."

Mrs.

Mrs. Leroy rose, and would have left the room, but Lord de Grey invited her to be re-seated, and a motive superior to curiosity, impelled her to accept his offer; he then recounted to his mother the artifices that had sullied Fanny Vincent's spotless character, and the despair which had led him to concur with the wishes of his father in regard to the union with Miss Darnley; her subsequent furious behaviour, and his remarks on a levity in her conduct, which almost exceeded the bounds of decorum, added to his extreme dislike of her boisterous and unfeminine character. He then enlarged upon the sweetness, the modesty, the virtue, the numerous perfections of his heart's enslaver, and besought Lady Margaret to intercede for him.

"When your father forgives you," said Lady Calshot, "I may probably be induced to follow his example."

“Oh, madam! my father does forgive me, I saw it in his eye; I saw it in the paternal smile he gave me; did he not call me his son, did he not?”

“Aye,” interrupted Lady Calshot, “but that was before he perfectly regained his senses; you cannot imagine how angry he was with you, and how much his fury was increased by Lord Adam Gowerland’s account of your marriage; even Lord Adam, who was before that, much your friend, was displeased with that rash step, and indeed, who could avoid being angry with such a rash connection, which united an indigent adventurer to the high-born heir of a noble family?”

Long he continued supplicating his mother; Lady Margaret, Lady Susan and Cecil added their entreaties to his; but Lady Calshot would not recede from her

her first concession, that she would pardon him when his father did; nor could all the eloquence of her son persuade her to take, as he did, the faint smile of his recovering father for a token of forgiveness.

Lady Susan wished much to make some enquiry after her father, and to know whether she might not be admitted to see him, and Lord de Grey, finding his supplications wholly ineffectual, went up to the earl's chamber door.

As he heard voices, he entered, and saw with surprise, Mrs. Leroy by the side of Lord Calthor's bed, earnestly talking to him; she had slipped out of the room unperceived during Lord de Grey's entreaties to his mother; and had been paying her patient a visit, not wholly occasioned by her attention to him.

The

The physician pronounced Lord Calshot now considerably better, and he was talking of being removed to town, but Mrs. Leroy would not hear of it, and insisted that he should consider himself as quite at home; the medical men thought it wiser to remain where he was, and Lord de Grey joined his persuasions to Mrs. Leroy, fully depending on her sincerity and goodness. She thanked him for his confidence in her with an expressive look, and he was delighted to find that Lord Calshot received him without any marks of resentment.

He fell on his knees by the bedside, and looking earnestly in his father's face, when Lord Calshot prevented his speaking. "My son," said he, "I know what you would say, I cordially and heartily forgive you; go call up Lady Calshot, that she may be a witness of what I have further to say."

Mrs.

Mrs. Leroy desired Lord de Grey not to move, for she would inform the ladies of his Lordship's wish to see them.

"The Ladies!" said Lord Calshot, enquiringly.

Lord de Grey informed his father of the arrival of the rest of his family, and the Earl was expressing his pleasure, when Mrs. Leroy led them all to the door, and was retiring; but Lord Calshot, who remarked it, said, "come in my good lady, and witness the full completion of your own work."

Her eyes filled with tears as she entered, and while the Earl was welcoming his sister, Mr. Cecil and Lady Susan, Lord de Grey turned to his hostess, and taking her hand, asked if he were indebted to her for his father's favourable disposition towards him.

“All will now soon be explained,” replied Mrs. Leroy, “at least, my Lord, be assured I am very much your well-wisher.”

“Now, Lady Calshot,” said the Earl, you have seen my high displeasure against our son; you have shared in it; there also, I intreat you, in the cordial joy of our reconciliation, and add your blessing to those I fervently pray to God to shower upon him.”

Lord de Grey knelt to receive his father's blessing, then turning to Lady Calshot, besought her to confirm it, which she did; he then rose and warmly embraced both his parents, with animated expressions of his gratitude and joy; he then turned to his other friends present, and was folded with kindness to each of their hearts.

Lord

Lord Calshot again addressed Lord de Grey. "My son," said he, "that this reconciliation may not be merely a form of words, but may be really conducive to your happiness, go instantly and fetch hither your wife; I already know her in part, and am anxious to embrace her as my daughter."

Scarcely could Lord de Grey believe the fulness of happiness which now poured upon him; he looked on all around him for a confirmation of what he heard; every face spoke their sincere congratulations, and Lady Susan and Lady Margaret both exclaimed, "oh! hasten, dearest de Grey, to bring hither the sweetest object of your affection; already do we love her, and we are impatient to behold her received as one of our family."

Lord de Grey offered to send, yet fearful of alarming her delicate nerves,

peculiarly delicate at present, he was easily persuaded to undertake so pleasant an embassy.

Mrs. Leroy attended him down stairs; "My Lord," said she, "when you return there is much to explain; I too am impatient to see your Lady, though neither of you know me."

"Though I am ignorant," said Lord de Grey, "what my obligations to you are, yet I feel that they are great, and that I am sensible of them."

"And I, Lord de Grey," resumed the weeping Mrs. Leroy, "thank Heaven with tears of joy and wonder, for conducting you all in this exigence, to the door of the only being on earth who could unravel a mystery deeply concerning your Lady, and by so doing, ease her own heart of an intolerable burthen; but

but let me not detain you, you must be impatient to be gone."

"Eager as I am," returned Lord de Grey, "to see my Fanny received and welcomed as her virtues deserve, I can hardly repress my impatience to learn the mystery you are possessed of; but I fly, my cottage is not very far distant, and you may rely on my utmost diligence."

With these words, he mounted his horse, and took the road to the cottage.

Mrs. Leroy stood at the door as long as he remained in sight, offering up a thousand prayers for every blessing on his head, and that of his beloved comfort. When she could no longer discern them, she returned to the now happy family above stairs, and finding Lord Calshot disposed to dose, would have offered them beds, but they rather chose

to pass the remainder of the night in conversation; they therefore adjourned to the parlour, where they remained in free and unreserved chat; for Mrs. Leroy had contrived to gain the confidence of the whole party.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

THE sun was just gilding the eastern horizon with his rays, when Lord de Grey arrived at the cottage; he roused Pearson, and going to his Fanny's chamber, gazed a moment on the sleeping object of his tenderness, before he awoke her, to inform her of the happy change in their affairs. While he yet hung over her enamoured, she opened her eyes, and beholding the Lord of her heart, cried, "Ah, de Grey! how long have you been here? What have you to tell me?"

His animated countenance spoke the joy of his heart, and he explained to

L 4

her

her, in a broken, incoherent way, the events of the night, conjuring her to rise instantly, and accompany him to Mrs. Leroy's. Pearson was already gone for a chaise.

Fanny could scarcely credit the joyful tidings, and who could this Mrs. Leroy be, so much their friend, and who seemed to possess such influence over the whole family? She wasted no time, however, in wild conjecture, but was ready to set off by the time the chaise arrived.

Lord de Grey led her down stairs, and placing himself beside her, recounted to her more at large the particulars of what had occurred since they parted the preceding evening. Fanny knew not how to express her congratulations to her husband on these happy events ;
tears

tears of joy trembled in her eyes, and she pressed his hand with fervor.

When they reached Mrs. Leroy's, that good woman was standing with Lady Susan at the door, watching their arrival, and Lady Susan instantly withdrew to give information to the party above-stairs, while Mrs. Leroy received the welcome travellers, and conducted them into the parlour.

Earnestly her eyes wandered over the face, and person of Lady de Grey;—"Blessed Heaven!" she cried, "let me have seen this angel where I would, instantly should I have known the daughter of her amiable mother."

Her eyes glistened, and she took Lady de Grey's hand to kiss, but that amiable creature, affected with the friendly earnestness of Mrs. Leroy, and her men-

tion of her mother, tenderly embraced her, and mingled her tears and careffes with the stranger's.

Lord de Grey was impatient to lead his wife to his father, who was, he understood, very much recovered, and Mrs. Leroy led them to Lord Calshot's chamber. He was sitting up in an easy chair, furrounded by his family; they all rose at the entrance of Lord and Lady de Grey, and the Earl received her with infinite tenderness; he bestowed on his son's marriage a thousand benedictions, and formally presented to Lady Calshot the consort of the heir of his title and estates.

Lady Calshot received her with civility, but coldness; but Lady Margaret and Lady Susan recompensed her heart for this, by the abundant warmth and evident sincerity of their gladness. Mrs.
Leroy

Leroy wept with joy, and Lord and Lady de Grey experienced more unalloyed delight than they had done since their marriage.

After a slight breakfast, which the Earl insisted on their eating before they entered on any interesting communications, Lord Calshot entreated Mrs. Vincent to relate her history, "which," said he, turning to Fanny, "is so intimately connected with your's, that it elucidates many circumstances which will hereafter, I hope, appear in a still clearer light."

"Great part of that mystery, my Lord," said Mrs. Leroy, "is not my own secret, and that I have sworn inviolably to guard, till either of the two persons to whom my fidelity was engaged, should demand me to give it up; my own history is less interesting to the

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present.

present company, I shall therefore briefly relate it.

“ My real name is Vincent, the name by which you, dear Lady de Grey, have been so long unjustly distinguished; and to which, I assure you, you had no claim. My husband was idle and extravagant, and by the goodness of a near relation of his, was sent out to India, where I believe he died, and I thought myself happy in obtaining the place of waiting-woman to the daughter of one of the first houses in the kingdom.

“ My Lady, whose name is one of the secrets I am bound to conceal, was every thing that was lovely, every thing that was amiable,—she was virtue’s self in the form of perfect beauty, but need I describe her, when this charming image of her angel-mother shews us what she was?”

Lady

Lady de Grey wept, but made no interruption.

“ You will easily believe,” continued Mrs Vincent, “ that my young lady did not want for admirers ; but she had unfortunately given her noble and invaluable heart to a third son of another noble family, from its ancestry, indeed one of the most noble in the peerage. This gentleman had every grace, and every accomplishment that could adorn a human being : he adored my lady, and his soft blandishments gained a return of her perfect love. She was yet no more than sixteen, when she resisted all the offers that were made her ; and confiding to me her resolution, was privately married to the man of her choice, by the chaplain of his family. The reason she had taken no steps to seek the consent of her parents, was the firm determination they had expressed to marry her suitably
to

to her distinguished rank, added to a private but rancorous pique against the family of her lover. In vain I sought to dissuade her from this step; in vain I represented to her its possible bad consequences; difficulties seemed only to encrease her ardour, and the marriage was solemnized in her own chamber. She continued to live with her parents as if no such occurrence had taken place; and in the course of a few months, confided to me a circumstance very natural in her situation, but which, while it rejoiced her heart, filled her with dreadful apprehension. The feuds between the two families raged with still more animosity than ever. Some event had disclosed to her parents that she was acquainted with the young nobleman, really her husband, and her father had denounced curses on her, if she ever spoke to him more. This was not the period to avow her marriage, and its natural

tural consequences. We were obliged to contrive as many stratagems, as if the dear infant she bore within her, had been the fruit of unhallowed love, and after numberless artifices, which it is not necessary to relate, my beloved mistress was safely delivered of a female infant, who being instantly baptized by the name of Frances, was immediately committed to my care, with orders to take her into the country, and educate her with care and privacy. I accordingly went from my mistress, who I believe suffered exceedingly after my departure.

“In a subsequent pregnancy, her secret was discovered, for she had no one with her so firmly attached to her interest as I had been. I often pressed her to permit me to return, but the interest of her darling child, weighed more with her, than her own security, and she entreated

me

me to watch over her little Fanny; need I say that darling Fanny is now Lady de Grey?

“When the dreadful discovery was made, horrible was the fury of my Lady’s father. His violence made her miscarry, and before she was well recovered, he turned her cruelly from his doors, and bade her go to the wretch she had chosen. Her Lord received her, but his mortification was extreme. He had hoped through her means, to raise himself to affluence, for his own family, though noble, was eminently poor.

“He fought me out in a village where I had hitherto resided, near London, and deceiving me by the affection and sweetness of his manner, told me what had happened, glossing over by very plausible reasons, the order he gave me, and which he assured me, my Lady concurred

red in. He told me, that all his hopes depended on the concealment of the period of their marriage, desired me to go into some distant neighbourhood for my residence, and even pointed out a village to which he gave the preference. He then made me take an oath, by which I bound myself never to discover the real parents of the child, and never to seek to intrude her on their family, till he should ask for her, solemnly swearing himself to reclaim his child, as soon as it would no longer oppose his interest, and shedding deceitful tears over the lovely babe, gave me money to provide for my journey, and took his leave; and from that time to this, never have I seen or heard of this Lord, whom my heart accuses as wicked and unnatural.

“I went however to reside where he had directed me, and was soon distinguished by Lady Sinclair, who with an earnestness

earnestness I knew how to account for, attached herself to the child, and at length adopted it. Previous however to my taking this step, I received a note as I thought from my Lady, couched in mysterious terms, and desiring me to leave the child with some friend, and come to her immediately. My attachment to the mother outweighed my fondness for the infant, particularly as I could consign her to the care of a lady so fond of her, and who earnestly wished her well. But when I arrived in London, I heard sad and contradictory accounts. I learnt that my Lady was living somewhere retired in the country; that a sort of reconciliation had been patched up between the families, which was far from being cordial, and while I was endeavouring to find means to go to her, or my finances were now very slender, I was arrested for a trifling debt, which however I was wholly unable to pay. I lay

lay in prison six months, for I had no means of rescuing myself; I would not apply to Mr. Wigstead, the friend who had done so much for my husband, and whom Lady de Grey knows so well, because I felt he had already done more for me than I could expect. His son Matthew, however, one day by accident discovered my situation, discharged the debt, and released me. I was afterwards tempted by letters from the East Indies to attempt a voyage thither to my husband, and after many endeavours to get a birth on board a ship, was told by a compassionate captain, that he would take me out if I pleased, but that he was positive of my poor husband's death. He had known him very well, and gave me so many particulars of his history, and such strong proofs of his decease, that I could doubt no longer but that I was pursued by some malicious enemy, who had deceived me by false letters
this

this time, as well as in alluring me to London. I now resolved to return into the north, having written many letters to my Lady, by all the addressees I could think of as probable to reach her, without receiving the least answer; hopeless therefore on that side, and without money, I was obliged to set out on foot for the north; but I was soon seized with a violent fever, and confined in a cottage for many weeks, where the humanity of the poor family gave me every attendance without hope of reward.

“ When I was pretty well recovered, I set forward again, but at an inn on the road, I was informed by a servant of Sir John’s, that Lady Sinclair was dead, and that the little girl she had adopted had not survived her many weeks. This blow, confirmed by his new mourning, took off all my desire to return into that neighbourhood; I returned therefore to
London,

London, and supported myself as well as I could, but should have struggled with poverty all my life, had not a relation, from whom I had no expectations, left me a decent and comfortable provision. I have since in vain endeavoured to learn something of my adored mistress, but my endeavours have failed: my acquaintance has not been in a line that could give me any account of her, and to this moment I am ignorant of her fate; yet I have reason to believe her living, as I have carefully watched all registers of deaths; but this I can assure your Lordship, that Lady de Grey is of equal birth with your son, and that most probably, had she her due, her fortune would be immense."

Lord Calshot remembered such a transaction in a noble family, and he could not help thinking in a family related to Lady Eleanor Sinclair; but noble

ble connections were easily discovered, and certainly they should not now long remain ignorant of his daughter-in-law's birth.

Lady Margaret had also her conjectures; but she respected the tears which stood in her niece's eyes, and forbore to give them vent; she cordially congratulated her on possessing the only advantage even malice could think she wanted, that of high birth, while in herself she united every inalienable and desirable perfection.

Lady Calshot modelled her coolness into formal ceremony, and perpetually gave her the title of your Ladyship; while Lady Susan's friendship overflowed at her eyes, and she wished Cecil had not been obliged to go to London, as he knew so much of the family connections in the great world, that she firmly believed

lieved he could have unravelled the mystery Mrs. Vincent's vow obliged her still to conceal.

In a few days more Lord Calshot was able to be removed to London; Lady Calshot invited her son and daughter-in-law to her house there, an invitation, which though made in a manner rather ceremonious than friendly, they readily accepted.

Lady Susan enquired of Mr. Cecil if he could recollect the circumstances of Mrs. Vincent's narration, but the events had either slipped his memory, or had not lain among his connexions; indeed, the whole affair had been conducted with so much caution, and the discovery so carefully hushed up, that the only circumstance publicly known, that of a daughter (not an only child) of one noble house, marrying a younger brother

ther of another, was not sufficiently remarkable to be fixed in the remembrance of the public.

The first care of Lady de Grey, on this happy change of her fortune, and her public reception into the family of her husband, was to send a request to Mr. Wigstead, to see him at Lord Calshot's house. That benevolent old man obeyed her summons immediately, and cordially rejoiced in the felicity of his amiable favourite. Their interview was tender and affectionate; Fanny had ever felt the sincerest regard for Mr. Wigstead, and he wept with joy at her merited prosperity; he renewed his former acquaintance with Mrs. Vincent with great pleasure, having ever retained a sincere esteem for the worthy and modest widow of his extravagant relation.

Lady

Lady de Grey enquired affectionately after Mrs. Moreland, and learned that that lady, on her arrival in the West-Indies, had found her husband just dead of the violent fever peculiar to those climates; he had lately purchased some estates there, as he had proposed remaining there for some years, and the possessions, being newly acquired, were not perfectly arranged. The settling these affairs detained Mrs. Moreland yet some little time abroad, but she would have less trouble, as the planter of whom her husband had bought the lands, was willing to retake them on terms very advantageous for the widow, who would find herself in very easy circumstances, and would be in England again before winter.

Fanny heard this account with pleasure; Mr. Moreland was not a man to

be regretted, and she thought her pleasing friend had now a better prospect of happiness than she had had since her marriage; she pleased herself with the hope of renewing a connexion which had ever given her so much pleasure, and at length, after a long and friendly visit, Mr. Wigstead took his leave, pleased to have such agreeable tidings to communicate to his own family of their quondam governess.

It is needless to describe the various sentiments with which the whole tribe of Wigsteads heard this marvellous intelligence; Edmund shrunk into nothing with apprehension, for having so desperately mistaken the situation of the mysterious Mrs. Flowerdale; but Matthew, who had never felt a sentiment he blushed to avow, paid her a visit of sincere congratulation the following

ing morning, and Lady de Grey easily conceived the reason why his forward brother kept aloof in this instance.

Mr. Cecil and Lady Susan did not remain long in town; they left Lord Calshot amending fast, so fast indeed, that by the end of August he felt himself sufficiently recovered to bear a journey into the North, as he wished much to re-visit Calshot-house; the physicians gave it as their opinion that the change of air would greatly contribute to his more perfect recovery, and preparations were accordingly made for the journey. They purposed passing the three following months in the country, and returning to London in time for Lady de Grey's expected confinement.

It is not to be doubted but that the tranquillity of Lord Calshot's mind greatly conduced to the amendment of

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his

his health ; reconciled to his son, who had ever been the pride and darling of his heart, he found every day in his daughter-in-law some new claim on his attachment ; indeed, her tender duty and unaffected complaisance were sufficient to have charmed the hardest heart, and even Lady Calshot began to feel something like affection for her ; this was not indeed a sentiment that good lady was much disposed to feel ; ceremony and etiquette took place in her of that politeness which springs from a benevolent heart. In the world the base coin passes as current as the sterling gold, but in more intimate connexions, the difference in value is sensibly perceived.

After a pleasant and easy journey, the travellers reached Calshot-house, and Fanny found herself once more in the scenes where she had passed her earliest youth ; various were her emotions when she

she caught a transient view of Sinclair-lodge, and her rapid imagination recalled the various events which had marked her life since her first introduction into the world.

Her arrival and splendid rank could not remain long a secret in the neighbourhood; every cottager knew and loved Fanny Vincent, and every one was eager to spread the tidings of her prosperity. The news reached Sinclair-lodge, and Sir John, who had never recovered of his wound, wrote to solicit her pardon.

That unfortunate man, prevented by his situation from pursuing his libertine course of life, and destitute of any more rational views to employ his mind, had fallen into a languor and debility of mind and body, melancholy to himself, and uncomfortable to those around him;

he had forgiven Mr. and Mrs. Eustace, who lived with him, but were far from seeking by any humane and tender conduct to rouse him from his listlessness, and to enliven the dull evening of his life.

Lady de Grey, who learnt this account of him at the same time she received his penitential letter, was struck with the change; her heart was never formed to harbour anger or revenge, and feeling the more pity, as she thought herself the occasion of his present melancholy state, cordially forgave him, willingly losing all remembrance of intended injury in gratitude for former favours.

A decent and civil intercourse again took place between the two families, in which perhaps Lord and Lady de Grey were the only people who were really sincere; Mrs. Eustace, of course, could
never

never be reconciled to the upstart Fanny, who had so far outstript her, not only in merit but in rank; she visited her, however, frequently enough, and scrutinised closely into all her actions, manners and dress, in hopes of fastening a blemish upon her; but whatever success her enquiries might have, in her own particular opinion, she never could persuade any of her hearers to agree with her, when she attempted to point out any deviation from the right in Lady de Grey.

Upon the whole, the three months at Calshot-house were passed with great festivity, and gave no inconsiderable addition to Lady de Grey's secret store of happiness; she had seen her first benefactor convinced of the folly of his former ways, and however insufficient his repentance yet was to conduct him to happiness, her charity hoped every

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thing.

thing for him; she had had the pleasure of forgiving a man against whom she had long ceased to bear any personal enmity, but for whom she really felt a considerable degree of gratitude, not only for his original kindness, but as he was in a manner the first cause of her actual felicity. She felt herself every day more and more dear to the friends of her husband, and she saw that dear husband himself, if possible, every hour more firmly attached to her.

Late in the month of November the family returned to London, and Lady de Grey immediately established herself in a house in Grosvenor-square; by the foresight and attention of Lord de Grey she found every thing ready to receive her, and the good Mrs. Vincent already living there, as that affectionate woman had been prevailed on to quit her own habitation, in order to reside with her
dear

dear Lady de Grey, as friend and companion, her manners and understanding, so far above the station she had been degraded to, qualifying her to fill that place with prudence and ability.

Early in December Lady de Grey presented her Lord with a son, which received the names of Aubrey Spencer; this darling infant seemed, if possible, to cement the union between his parents still closer than ever, and neither the youth, the beauty, nor natural vivacity of Lady de Grey could hinder her from undertaking the tenderest of all maternal offices,—a resolution which delighted Lord de Grey, and which she exercised with the most graceful delicacy.

Her youth and good constitution enabled her to comply with her Lord's desire of being presented at court, in time to make her appearance at the drawing-

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room,

room, on the birth-day of a queen so deservedly the favourite of her people, and by one in whose exalted station has thought it her chief merit to give her subjects a bright example of domestic virtues, uniting the excellence of the parent with the splendor of royalty, the virtues of Lady de Grey were sure to meet with a kind reception.

She wished to avoid the ceremony of presentation on so public a day as the birth-day, and it was therefore performed two days previous to it; and on that distinguished day Lord de Grey had the transport of seeing his innocent, his unassuming Fanny, eclipse, in her modest and delicate charms, all the women present, and the court of England never was deficient in female beauty. She was the object of universal admiration; no eye beheld her without delight, and every tongue gave to her the tribute of praise.

praise. She was soon desirous of retiring, and as they passed through the outward apartments, she suddenly met in one of the doorways, Lord Montraville.

“Miss Vincent!” he exclaimed, “is it possible?”

She pressed forward to Lord de Grey, extremely agitated, and hastened him onward; Lord Montraville followed with his eyes the object of his long and successful attention, and when he reached the drawing room, heard every tongue employed in praise of Lady de Grey.

His mind was from that moment agitated with various passions, which in his long course of acquaintance with life, had known no precedent; though he had sought Fanny Vincent with such illaudable views, he rejoiced, with a sin-

cerity he could not account for, in her present prosperity; he felt a secret satisfaction that she had escaped his toils; he contemplated her happy situation as the reward of deserving virtue, and though he knew it would be a vain attempt to seek the acquaintance of Lord de Grey, though he scarcely dared hope for the forgiveness of a woman he had sought to injure so deeply, yet such was his infatuation, so unaccountable the pleasure he received from seeing her, that he determined to learn her haunts, and whenever it was possible to throw himself in her way; so beautiful, so charming a young creature must necessarily become violently the fashion; her steps would certainly be haunted, and her acquaintance known; it would be easy to obtain opportunities of being in her company, and feasting his eyes with unreserved admiration of her charms.

Lady

Lady de Grey, though a fond mother and a domestic wife, sought not to seclude herself from society; she formed not indeed a very numerous circle of acquaintance, though personally known to almost all the splendid names in the peerage; but she sought a few sensible and pleasing friends, with whom she accepted every enjoyment that did not interfere with her favourite occupation in the nursery. And Lord de Grey beheld his Fanny, charming in every thing, fulfilling every duty with that real pleasure which avoids ostentation, and lending a grace to fashion and amusement, by the unaffected facility, and invariable decorum with which she joined in them; while the mothers of the age held her up as a pattern to the rising generation, the young could not accuse her of too great a partiality for seclusion; she was elegant, gay, and fashionable, and brought private virtues into great repute
by

by her ready acquiescence with the manners of polite life; wherever she went, partiality followed her steps; her manners, her dress, became highly the fashion; and she united the opposite perfections of domestic virtues, and outward elegance. Among those whom she honoured with peculiar intimacy was Lady Anne Villars, daughter of a deceased earl, and widow of a distinguished general officer; this lady was her chief friend in the absence of Lady Susan Cecil, who remained in the north till late in the spring; with Lady Anne Villars she frequently spent a sociable evening, when she did not chuse to go into public, a sort of enjoyment she rather avoided during her nursery confinement.

About this time she received by the hands of Mr. Wigstead, who frequently called to rejoice in the happiness of his favorite,

favorite, letters from Mrs. Moreland; that lady's affairs detained her still longer in the West Indies, and she did not expect to be in England before the following June. Enclosed was a letter from her little affectionate Mary, which gave her great pleasure, and which was as follows:

TO LADY DE GREY.

Dear Madam,

“ I hear you are a Lady now, and if
“ I did not know you were so good, I
“ should be afraid of writing to you;
“ but I am sure you will be glad to hear
“ of my good fortune, little as I deserve
“ it, Madam; oh, Miss Vincent! (I beg
“ your pardon, I do not know how to help
“ calling you so); to be sure, I am not
“ quite certain whether I have done
“ right, but Mrs. Moreland knew every
“ thing,

“ thing and advised me, so I hope I have
“ done for the best ; but I will tell you
“ what has happened ; you know to be
“ sure, Madam, that Mrs. Moreland is
“ a widow, and is very busy in settling
“ about the plantation her late husband
“ had bought ; well, Madam, the gentle-
“ man who sold it him, and is buying it
“ again, has a son about thirty ; I won’t
“ say how agreeable I thought him, for
“ that would have signified nothing, but
“ he was pleased with me, Madam, poor
“ simple me ; and he told me he loved
“ me, and asked me to be his wife ; I
“ own to you that I felt much delighted,
“ but I knew it was not for me to marry,
“ so I burst into tears, and begged his
“ pardon, and ran up to Mrs. More-
“ land, and told her all that had hap-
“ pened, both now and formerly ; and
“ she was very good, as you know she
“ always is, Madam, and she comforted
“ me, and advised me either to tell or

“ to write to Mr. Philips a whole ac-
“ count of it ; but I knew I could not
“ do either, so I begged of her (it was
“ very bold, I know, Madam, but what
“ could I do ?) to go down and tell Mr.
“ Philips that I could not marry him.
“ Well, Madam, down she went, and a
“ long while she staid, and when she
“ came up again, “ Mary,” said she,
“ I have explained your situation to Mr.
“ Philips, and he seems determined to
“ marry you ; and so, my love, if you do
“ not dislike him, I think you can’t do
“ better than accept him, go down to
“ him, my dear.” I went back to the
“ parlour, blubbered all over, for I could
“ not help crying like a fool ; and Mr.
“ Philips behaved so very kind to me,
“ that at last I had nothing to say, and
“ so, Madam, we were married ; and I
“ hope you are but as happy with my
“ Lord, as I am now, Madam, and I am
“ sure you need not wish for any thing
“ more ;

“more; though you deserve to be as
“happy as the world can make you,
“and I am sure, if you are not so, I
“could never enjoy any thing any more;
“don’t be offended with me for being
“so bold, Madam, but indeed, if you
“were my own sister, I could not love
“you better; pray, Madam, will you be
“so good as to write to me, for now I
“shall live here for a great many years,
“perhaps, and all that makes me sorry
“is, that perhaps I shall never see you
“any more; but yet Mr. Philips tells
“me he will take me over to England
“in a year or two; but you know,
“Madam, business may prevent him.
“Dear Lady, what a happy man is
“Lord de Grey; and I hope you are
“happy too, and that you may always
“be so, is the constant prayer of,

“You affectionate humble servant,

MARY PHILIPS.”

Lady de Grey read this letter with real pleasure; she rejoiced in the happiness of the artless girl, for she knew, whatever had been her misfortunes, her heart had remained uncorrupted, and was such as would do honour to any station. She loved her for her unaffected simplicity, and ever looked upon Mary as her own deliverer.

About this time, she went to pass a sociable evening with Lady Anne Villars, Mrs. Vincent, as usual, accompanying her. They had been seated about an hour, when a servant announced Lord Montraville.

“Good God, Lady Anne! do you know Lord Montraville?”

“Yes, my dear, is that so wonderful?”

“Had I known it,” replied Lady de Grey, “I would have begged—”

She could proceed no farther, and Lady Anne was obliged to suspend her curiosity, which was raised very high, for the door was thrown open, and Lord Montraville entered.

He had learnt that Lady de Grey was very intimately acquainted with Lady Anne Villars, and had frequently besieged her doors, in hopes of meeting with the object he sought for. He was at length successful, but the pleasure he expected was greatly damped by the sight of her Ladyship's companion. The face of Mrs. Vincent haunted him like an old acquaintance which he was far from recognizing with any pleasure, and the steadfastness with which she observed him, added not a little to his embarrassment.

I know it would be more to the honour of an English peer, to bear unblushing

blushing the thickest observation ; but Lord Montraville, who was indeed so far advanced in the science of fashionable intrepidity, that he could undoubtedly have supported a whole volley of opera-glasses from every box round the house, with perfect non-chalance, and perhaps even a conscious triumph, was actually, somehow or other, disconcerted by the pointed gaze of an old woman whom nobody knew. What could possess him to trouble himself about her ? her name indeed was Vincent, the name by which he had formerly known his charmer, but by the extreme deference she paid Lady de Grey, she was certainly not her mother. What other ideas she, her name, and her observation raised in the bosom of Lord Montraville, shall not now be enquired into ; suffice it to say that he placed himself beside Lady de Grey, and trying to hem away the embarrassment Mrs. Vincent occasioned in him,

him, he contrived, by his humility and evident pleasure at her present situation, to regain the full favour of the charmer of his heart, who indeed had never known the full extent of his evil intentions.

When she returned home to Grosvenor-square, she found Lord de Grey reading in the library; he welcomed her with tenderness, and as she gave him her hand, a rising tear dashed her affectionate smile, "Whence come you, my love?" said he.

"I have," she replied, "been passing an hour or two with Lady Anne Villars, and who do you think I met there?"—She answered his enquiries by naming Lord Montraville.

"And could he support your fight?" asked Lord de Grey.

"He

"He seemed really overjoyed to see me," she replied, "and readily gained my entire pardon, if indeed he ever meant me any harm."

"Oh, Fanny!" said her Lord.

"Well, well," my Lord, "that is all over now, and why should we cherish anger against a malice so impotent? Do you know he said, he did not presume to ask leave to call on me, but he should always seek for all intelligence of me, and should always rejoice to meet me accidentally."

Lord de Grey, who saw more deeply into the character and conduct of Lord Montraville than his unsuspecting wife, could not relish the idea of any further acquaintance, and as he said no more, she went up to the nursery, whither Mrs. Vincent, contrary to her usual custom, did

did not accompany her. She seated herself with Lord de Grey, and entered into an earnest conversation with him, in which they were still deeply engaged, when Lady de Grey re-entered the parlour, though they broke it off on her appearance.

The next morning, at the usual breakfast hour, Mrs. Vincent was out; Lady de Grey was rather surprized, as she had left no particular message for her, and she could not avoid perceiving, that in spite of his tender and polite attentions to her, her Lord was evidently thoughtful, and occasionally absent. She rallied him on his gravity, but the serious steadfastness with which he replied, and the tenderness of his manners, prevented her further enquiries.

After breakfast he led her to the nursery, where they amused themselves with
their

their mutual darling. A carriage stopped, and a knock at the door announced some visitor.

Lord de Grey put the child into her arms, and left the room ; though she imagined it to be Mrs. Vincent, and was curious to know her business, Lady de Grey read in her husband's manner, a wish that she would remain there, and indeed, at that instant the child beginning to cry, took from her all wish but that of satisfying his infant wants, and while thus employed, she hung over the being she had given birth to, and now sustained with food from her bosom, she forgot that any other subject in the world had power to interest her for a moment.

When the little darling however was satisfied, and all his young faculties were suspended in sleep, her curiosity returned, and she began to wonder at

the length of her Lord's stay. She still continued to gaze on the innocent pledge of their loves when he tapped at the door.

"Are you at leisure, my love?" cried he.

"To be sure, my Lord," she replied, "come in."

Lord de Grey came in; a fine glow overspread his features, a smile sat on his countenance; he took her hand, and kissing it, said, "Let me lead you down stairs, Mrs. Vincent is below."

They left the nursery together, and as they moved along the gallery in silence Lord de Grey said softly, "I believe we are not far from the explanation of our mystery."

"My

"My dear Lord!"

"Why should you not hear it?" resumed he, "Mrs. Vincent has seen your father; he is impatient to see, to bless his daughter."

She stopped, she laid her hand on his arm, and turning her enquiring eyes on his face, seemed to wish to know what she feared to ask.

He read her thoughts, and replied to them, "that her mother was yet living and well, that she was in the country, and therefore knew not the happiness that awaited her.

Lady de Grey trembled, and hiding her face with both hands burst into tears; her Lord pressed her to his heart, soothed her emotions, and led her to the parlour, where she found Mrs. Vincent.

FANNY.

They embraced each other in silence, and that kind friend mingled her tears with those of her lovely charge; when some moments were past, Lady de Grey exclaimed, "And now tell me my friend, to whom I owe my birth."

"First," said Mrs. Vincent, "you must tell me whether your heart is wholly free from all resentment against your father's most intimate friend, Lord Montraville; they are united in a stricter intimacy than most brothers, and if you cannot see Lord Montraville without emotion, you will have but little pleasure in your father's company."

"And do you think me so vindictive, Mrs. Vincent?" replied Lady de Grey, "I ever liked and esteemed Lord Montraville, and if he ever did harbour any ill intentions towards me, they are buried in the remembrance of the kindness and respect

respect with which he ever treated me; I have owed to him many hours of suspension from the miseries that overwhelmed me, and feel infinitely more gratitude than ill will towards him; I have thought fit to say so much, that you might make no more scruples about informing me to whom I am to pay my filial duty. Dear Mrs. Vincent end this suspense, you little know my impatience to embrace a father."

"Oh, Fanny! Fanny!" cried Lord Montraville, bursting from an adjoining room, "and will you own a father in me?"

Overcome with astonishment, Lady de Grey threw herself at the feet of Lord Montraville, who was indeed her father. The scene that ensued it is impossible to describe. As the painter drew a veil over the face of Agamemnon when he

doomed his darling Iphigenia to the altar, so must the varied emotions of the parent, the child, the husband, be imagined, not delineated.

Whatever were their first feelings they ended in transport, and Lord Montraville, could now explain the contradictory sentiments by which he at once pursued and avoided Miss Vincent, by which he rejoiced in the disappointment of his fondest schemes.

After they had a little composed their spirits they proceeded to Lord Calshot's; Lord Montraville was impatient to introduce his Fanny as Lady Frances Fitzroy. Great were the congratulations and rejoicings on this event, and a courier was dispatched to Lady Montraville, at the seat in Cornwall, to inform her of the discovery of her long-lost daughter.

When

When Mrs. Vincent had heard Lady de Grey talk of Lord Montraville, she little expected to find him to be Lord Frederick Fitzroy; when she shuddered at his pursuit of the defenceless Fanny, little did she think the neglected child was sought by the careless, the worse than careless, the cruel father; but the moment she beheld his Lordship at the house of Lady Anne Villars, she recognised his person, though so many years had elapsed since she had seen him; hence her strict examination, and hence the embarrassment of the Earl, who recollected in the companion of Lady de Grey, the friendly assistant of his wife, the being to whom she had intrusted his daughter.

That very evening Mrs. Vincent communicated her discovery to Lord de Grey, and concerted with him her visit to Lord Montraville, the following morning.—

She unravelled the whole of the mystery, though from delicacy to Lady de Grey's filial feelings she concealed many circumstances from her; she strove to represent Lord Montraville in the fairest light to his newly discovered daughter, and therefore told her not that Lord Montraville, who was brother to Lady Eleanor Sinclair, had pointed out to Mrs. Vincent the village near Sinclair-lodge, after which he wrote to his sister an account of the new settler in her neighbourhood, mentioning Mrs. Vincent as his mistress, and little Fanny as a child of chance, and requesting her to take the brat under her protection, and he would find some means of providing for the mother. In fact, he was disappointed when the discovery of his marriage took place, that it was not followed by an immediate reconciliation with his wife's family, which was one of the richest as well as noblest in the kingdom;

dom; his own father, the Duke of Charleville, was, as before-mentioned, extremely poor, and Lord Frederick hoped, by uniting himself to the Lady Frances de Nassau, daughter to the Duke of Maloney, to become possessor of the vast riches that lady was expected to enjoy, as she had only one brother to share with her the wealth of that opulent family; when he found that this wealth depended on the will of the Duke of Maloney, whose anger against his family extended itself through every branch of his own, that every distant relative of the Nassaus conceived themselves aggrieved by the connexion Lady Frances had formed, and that they were more disposed to cast her off than to receive him into their friendship, when at last a sort of reconciliation was patched up between the families, but a very scanty allowance made to the man who had stolen the daughter of the Nassaus, then

his discontented spirit began visibly to shew itself.

In a short time after this Mrs. Vincent was decoyed to town by false letters, and induced to give up her child to Lady Eleanor, who was eager to have it under her care, and who esteemed even the bastard blood of her brother, superior in nobility to the legitimate offspring of Sir John Sinclair. Lady Eleanor was never wanting in art to accomplish her designs, and her manner to Mrs. Vincent was so plausible, and indeed her intentions towards Fanny were really so good, that her persuasions prevailed over the fond attachment of Mrs. Vincent, and she relinquished her charge that she might be more at liberty to pay her duty to the mother. Lord Montraville however never intended to admit Mrs. Vincent again into his family; his first child was now off his hands, and he
resolved

resolved to spread a report of its death, that he might never be obliged to support it; his small income was very insufficient for his own purposes, and he confined Lady Frances Fitzroy, for he was not yet Lord Montraville, to the country, forming various pretexts for remaining in town himself. The letters which would have decoyed Mrs. Vincent to her mistress were forged by him; the creditor who threw her into prison was instigated by him, and the subsequent letters from her husband were also a plot of Lord Frederick's. All this while he took care to intercept any letter of her's to Lady Frances, and at last the poor woman was convinced either that her lady was kept from her, or did not wish to see her; she had her suspicions of Lord Frederick, but what could a poor unassisted woman do against a nobleman and a man of the world?

About this time occurred the sudden death of Lady Eleanor Sinclair, who had carefully kept the secret of the young Fanny's birth, which now died with her, from her prejudice against the plebeian blood of her husband; she was always inclined to exalt this false scion, as she thought it, of her brother's family, above Miss Sinclair, and by so doing, created the little Fanny more enemies than friends. On Lady Sinclair's death, the false account of the child's birth died with her, and the loss of the young heir gave rise to a report of the death of her Ladyship's pet; a report Lord Frederick Fitzroy eagerly countenanced, and which was soon carried with strong circumstances, to Lady Frances, who had borne very impatiently her long separation from a child she now wished to avow; but Lord Frederick, who had unbounded influence over her, for she doated on him, persuaded her to suffer the

the child to remain yet under Mrs. Vincent's care for a while, till their income should be enlarged; that such a witness of the young Fanny's legitimacy still existing, it would be perfectly easy to prove it at any subsequent period, and amused her with pleasing accounts from the North, which he pretended to have received from Mrs. Vincent. On the death of Lady Eleanor, he informed his lady with the utmost tenderness that a malignant fever had carried off both Mrs. Vincent and the little Fanny, and having established in the mother a firm belief of the child's death, as well as of its nurse's, his task became more easy. He had never liked Sir John Sinclair, and after his sister's death, soon dropped the little connection he had ever kept up with him; he knew Sir John was not privy to the birth of his child, and as he soon ceased to hear any thing about her, he soon lost all remembrance of her;

her; he even began to believe that the report of her death might very likely be true, as he heard nothing even of any girl brought up in Sir John Sinclair's family.

When he afterwards met with his daughter at Mrs. Greville's, it is remarkable that Fanny, from motives of delicacy to an erring benefactor, avoided mentioning the name of Sinclair, and concealed, as much as possible, every thing that could lead to a discovery of the family with whom she had been connected; and Lord Frederick, now Montraville, had no suspicion that he was seeking the destruction of his own daughter, whom indeed, he had long ago ceased to consider as living.

Lady Montraville, who in her solitude in the country, neglected by her husband, became no more a mother, gradually

gradually sunk into a state of pining melancholy; the Duke of Maloney died, and the son who succeeded to his estates was a weak, dissipated young man, incapable of asserting the rights, and defending the honour of his sister, who was then left to the wasting misery of her fate; many and many an anxious thought did she cast towards the dear pledge of her early love, her early imprudence—and though his cruel neglect had failed to root affection from her constant heart, she wept in secret the irregularities of her lord, and felt she had merited a better fate. Determined, however, not to seek that kindness from pity, love, extinguished love, would no longer bestow, Lady Montraville concealed her sorrows in her own bosom, and bore smiles and content in her manner, while the dart of anguish rankled at her heart. Deceived by her conduct, her Lord concluded his indifference had destroyed

destroyed her affection, and that she felt not the misery a soul more acutely feeling would have suffered in her situation; he ascribed to apathy this noblest effort of female fortitude, and when he found her in her dreary solitude, exerting her various talents to soothe her sorrows, and gilding the mansion of melancholy with the forced smile of assumed content, he hushed the troublesome monitor in his bosom by persuading himself his wife was happy, at least that she was not unhappy.

Awakened to remorse by the discovery of the real danger into which his blind pursuit of every predominant inclination had led him, Lord Montraville wrote to his Lady in a style of penitence and affection; had it not been for Lady de Grey, however, he would so little have considered the warmth and delicacy of maternal feelings, as barely to have
requested

requested her immediate company in London, without explaining his reason for wishing to see her, or hinting at the interesting discovery so recently made; but his daughter, well aware of the danger of such a surprise, intreated that the circumstance might be briefly unfolded, to spare her the danger of a sudden disclosure of a secret so wonderful, and so nearly touching the heart of a mother.

Far different indeed, in such a case must be the feelings of Lord and Lady Montraville. Lord Montraville, through a long course of gallantry and dissipation, had been gradually hardening his heart to all the natural feelings of humanity. He had neglected a fond and amiable wife, and thought every venal fair one more cultivated to renovate the decaying passions in his soul. He had deserted an infant unoffending daughter, and had actually persuaded himself, without

without sufficient proof, that she was really no more, because he had felt her an incumbrance, and wished her dead; he had succeeded in persuading both the mother and himself that she was so. A man originally born with virtuous feelings could never have arrived at this pitch of wicked insensibility, and the small still voice of conscience, the sense of virtue, so natural to a young heart, he had long since been endeavouring to blunt by persevering in a course of dissipation, too fashionable, though it leads to the total extinction of every generous feeling and every noble sentiment. Lady Montraville, on the contrary, born with exquisite susceptibility, had early given her heart to a man calculated to inspire her young mind with affection, and given it with a trusting confidence, an easy faith which deserved a better return. Formed for the endearing offices of maternal life, the young, the beautiful Lady Frances Maloney,

Malohey, sought not the distinguishing rank, the splendor, the riches, she had so just a claim to; she hoped, with the man of her choice, to taste of that happiness, so dear to sensible hearts, and chiefly to be found in the small circle of domestic attachment.

Her friends offended by this first fond step, her Lord neglected her, she lost her children, and continued to nourish in solitude the acutest feelings of misery and disappointment. Thus checked in her first and warmest hopes, no object remained to fill up her heart; an aching void there distracted her, and her tenderness recoiled on the fanciful images of what her husband once was, and what her children might have been. Too haughty to support compassion, she deceived the world by a shew of contentment, little meaning to deceive that husband, who she thought must know the

the warmth and sensibility of her heart; but finding her mistake, and that her fortitude reconciled him to his own conduct, instead of making him ashamed of it, she sought from her own efforts to acquire a degree of tranquility; but how impossible was it to avoid reflecting on her miserable disappointment? How impossible to blunt in solitude the keen edge of those feelings so imminently suited to her susceptible mind? Lord Montraville then had no idea of the exquisite tenderness of his Lady's heart, nor of the poignancy of the surprise he had meditated for her, and but for the persuasions of Lady de Grey, the mother might perhaps have sunk under the pressure of immediate joy. The courier was charged with three letters; the first, expressive of contrition, and a request to her Ladyship to revisit London; this was to be followed by one, hinting the re-appearance of Mrs. Vincent,

cent,

cent, and the possibility of the existence of Lady Frances; the third declared not only the possibility, but the certainty of the discovery of that amiable pledge of their first loves.

It cannot be doubted, but that Lady Montraville was preparing with the first letter to hasten to town; nor can it be imagined that the subsequent intelligence at all delayed her preparations; yet so far did even this managed surprise overcome her strength, that she could not travel with the expedition that would have suited her feelings; she was obliged to sleep upon the road, and Lady de Grey, extremely desirous of going herself to her mother, could ill brook the confinement in London insisted on by her friends. It is natural to imagine that the idea of her mother filled her heart with far more exquisite sensations than a father so known could inspire.

The

The moment so ardently expected, arrived at last, and while Lady de Grey was watching the sleep of her darling son, hanging over his cradle with fond affection, Lord de Grey led in Lady Montraville. They entered softly, and Lady de Grey having heard no carriage, concluded it was the nurse, and raised not her eyes from their favorite object. At length a voice which spoke to her heart, softly cried, "My Fanny! Almighty God, I thank thee!"

Lady de Grey instantly rose, and beheld her mother and her husband watching her with looks of love. She was about to throw herself on her knees, but Lady Montraville caught her in her arms, and pressing her fondly to her maternal bosom, shed the pure tears of delicious and inexpressible rapture. One moment she strained her to her heart, the next, gazed at her lovely, her perfect form.

form. She then cast her eyes on Lord de Grey, then on the infant pledge of their affection, and raising them with pious transport to Heaven, fervently invoked blessings on their heads.

Lady de Grey overpowered, was unable to speak. She beheld in Lady Montraville a figure which commanded all her love and reverence; she felt the blessings of a mother's love; she silently yielded to the rapture it inspired. While Lord de Grey was unwilling to interrupt the high-wrought felicity they appeared to enjoy.

How long this rapturous silence would have continued, cannot be imagined, for Lord Montraville entered, and found his daughter locked in the embraces of her mother. Lady Montraville had already seen her husband, and had learnt from him some few particulars respecting

ing the discovery of her daughter. Some circumstances, he hoped, would be for ever buried in oblivion, and his lovely child was equally desirous of concealing from one parent the misconduct of the other. She determined to seal her lips respecting Lord Montraville's pursuit of herself, and to be guided by him with respect to the mode of discovery he chose to acknowledge.

Of the truth in this instance, however, he thought no concealment necessary; but of all their previous acquaintance, he wished all remembrance to be totally dropped, and Lady de Grey, who ever thought with pain on the failings of her father, had herself adopted the same design, and had prevailed on her Lord to concur in it; this however was unknown to Lord Montraville, and his fears, lest any thing should transpire which he wished to be forgotten, led him to the apartment,

apartment, with an anxious and clouded brow.

His entrance rather abated the transports of the meeting. Lady Montraville felt that her rapture at beholding her daughter, was a silent reproach to the husband who had so long separated them; and he was not so true a penitent as to humble himself before those he had offended, and to rejoice in the retrospect of his errors as a penance due to them. The first acknowledgment of his daughter, had indeed softened him to some shew of penitence; but though he determined really to relinquish his dissipations, and confine his pleasure to the bosom of his family, he could not bear to be looked on in the humiliating light of a penitent, and his pride wrested aside many circumstances, which meant no allusion to him.

Lady Montraville, more accustomed to his disposition, unable to bear the shadow of reproach, instantly turned her attention from her daughter to her husband, and thanked him with submissive tenderness, for having procured her this happiness.

Lord Montraville, eager to find employment for their attention, suffered but a short time to elapse, before he proposed sending to Lord Calshot, nor would he permit them to enjoy this first evening undisturbed.

He contrived indeed so much to busy them all, as for some days left scarce an interval for the luxury of private delight. The circumstances of the family excited infinite curiosity, and procured them a multitude of visitors, few of whom could dive into the mystery in which Lord Montraville willingly involved the affair.

But

But like all other wonders, it strutted its hour upon the stage, and gave way to some new topic of universal admiration. A new actress, an elopement, a divorce, or a royal marriage.

Mrs. Vincent who had deeply shared in all the bliss of the family, and who had been received by Lady Montraville with joy and affection, was a cool and discerning observer of all that passed. She saw in Lord Montraville's incessant efforts to find them amusement, which led from home quiet conference to public places and noisy crowds, all the restlessness occasioned by a consciousness of guilt, and a fear of discovery. She saw how much all the party sighed for undisturbed happiness, and leisure to enjoy their mutual felicity, and she gave Lady de Grey a hint to quiet, by some express declaration, the apprehensions of her father. Lady de Grey felt herself

unequal to the task, yet conscious of its probable pleasing effects, besought her Lord to undertake it. Lord de Grey, though highly exasperated against Lord Montraville for the whole train of wickedness which he more compleatly understood than she did, was yet willing enough to consign to oblivion crimes which had failed of their effect, and misconduct he was no longer entitled to revenge. He therefore sought a private conference with Lord Montraville, in which he quieted the fears he entertained of being laid open to Lady Montraville, by a solemn promise of silence; and Lord de Grey having now obtained the privilege of virtue over crest-fallen iniquity, from that moment became the controller of Lord Montraville, who consulted him in all his actions, and sought his approbation in every circumstance.

Nor

Nor did the virtuous man abuse his influence. He sought only to promote the happiness of those with whom he was so nearly connected, and ever treated Lord Montraville with all the respect due to his wife's father, and in no instance ever betrayed the least remembrance of his former errors. Lord Montraville, by living in virtuous society, acquired the semblance of virtue. Lady Montraville enjoyed in the society of her daughter the purest happiness of which her heart was capable, and in the return of her husband to decency and decorum, a sort of amends for her former sufferings.

Lady Susan Cecil, and Mr. Cecil, who came to town to share in the felicity of their favourite, continued ever the firmest friends to their brother and his amiable wife.

Lord and Lady Haughtonbury lived, as most fashionable couples do, independent of each other, giving into all the excesses of dissipation, encumbered with debts, and not enjoying one solid comfort.

Sir John Sinclair, after languishing some time in melancholy and pain, died, a disconsolate picture of the sad consequences attending so libertine a life. He left a very handsome legacy to Lady de Grey, and every thing else to his daughter, independent of her husband. A mode of conduct, which while it kept Mr. Eustace to a decorous behaviour towards her, gave her an unrestrained liberty in all her actions, which she had neither sense nor principle enough not to misuse. Her character was totally lost, while she appeared in all public places with unabashed effrontery, covered with jewels, rouged exceedingly, and attended

attended by the minions of the present moment.

How different was the conduct of Lord and Lady de Grey, who pursued through their lives the invariable rule of right. Tenderly attached to each other, they knew no possibility of separate happiness. Firm to their first friends, they sought not to enlarge the circle, though universally benevolent, and kind to all. Every tongue blessed them, and every heart wished them well. They had the felicity of seeing all happy who depended on them, of contributing to the reformation of Lord Montraville, and to the peace of his lady.— They continued uniformly to respect Mr. Wigstead, who, a firm friend to Fanny in her adversity, was her constant favourite and counsellor. They saw their children multiply around them, and saw them grow up, in every grace
and

and perfection. Nothing was wanting to their felicity. They would often look back on their past life, and while contemplating their former trials, would acknowledge, that they only contributed to their present enjoyment; while Lady de Grey looking round her on the numerous family and friends which she now possessed, could scarcely believe she was once the outcast of society, unpossessed of a single friend—that most helpless of all beings,

A DESERTED DAUGHTER.

FINIS.



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